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W. G. Johnston,
26 July 1916.

Macleod
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THE GENTLE HEART.

"Suffereth long and is kind ; envieth not ; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

THE GENTLE HEART:

A SECOND SERIES

OF

"Talking to the Children."

BY

ALEXANDER MACLEOD, D.D.

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IN MEMORIAM :

ALEXANDER, AND MARY MACKENZIE MACLEOD,

OF NAIRN AND GLASGOW.

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THE GENTLE HEART.

THE GENTLE HEART.

THE other day a friend brought me a song which was sung in Italy six hundred years ago. He called it "The Song of the Gentle Heart." It is a song in praise of gentleness in the life, and of gentle deeds and words and thoughts. And what the song says is, that all gentleness has its home in the heart; and that unless there be gentleness in the heart there can be none in the life.

At the time this song was sung, there were many who thought that gentleness could only be found in palaces and castles, and among the people who dress in splendid clothes. But the song says that it may also be found in the most humble cottages, and among people whose hands are rough with daily toil. It is the gentle heart which makes people gentle. Whether a home be rich or poor,

if those who live in it have gentle hearts, that home is the dwelling-place of gentlefolks.

After hearing this song I could think of nothing else. The words of the old singer kept sounding like music in my soul. And I also, as if I had got back his eyes, began to see his visions.

And all the bypast week these visions have been coming to me. When I went out into the country, they met me in lonely roads. When I went into the town, I saw them in the crowded streets. Night and day, and every day, they came. And every day they seemed brighter than the day before. At last I said, I will bring them into my words to the children, and they shall be visions for them as well as for me. I will call them Visions of the Gentle Heart.

I.

One of the first visions of the Gentle Heart I saw came to me hid under the rough form of an old Roman soldier. If I had seen him only when he was dressed for battle, I should not have thought of him as gentle. I should have seen him carrying a sword to kill men with, and a shield to defend himself from being killed by others. And as he had other soldiers under him, I might have heard

him speaking to them in a loud, commanding way, and telling them to do hard and cruel things.

But when I saw him his sword and shield were hanging on the wall, and he was sitting beside a little bed in his room in the soldiers' barracks. After one of his dreadful battles he had got for his share of the spoil a little boy who had been taken captive—a poor little boy, torn away from father and mother, and forced to be a slave. He was the slave of this soldier; he cooked his food, he tidied his room, he polished his armour, he went his errands. Just a little slave—nothing higher. This rough-looking soldier might have beaten him every day if he liked; nobody would have found fault. He was his own property—just as his horse was—just as his dog was—and he might have sold him like any other property.

But under the outside roughness of this soldier was a gentle heart. He did not beat his slave; he loved him; he looked upon him as his own son; he let the little man have a home in his heart. It was a joy to him to see the child happy; it was a grief to him to see him sad. And it was a great grief to him when one day the little slave fell sick. Then the rough soldier was as tender as a mother could be. He sat by his bed; he watched

over him day and night. Many a time, I am sure, as the thought came into his heart, "My little boy will die," the hot tears came rolling down his cheeks. And he thought the boy was really about to die; the little fellow's breathing became more feeble, his face grew very pale, his eyes were closed.

One day, as the big soldier was sitting by the little bed, somebody came in and said, "A great prophet has come to the town. Jesus of Nazareth has come."

"Jesus of Nazareth?" the soldier said; "the healer of sickness? Oh that He would heal my boy!"

But then this thought came into his mind, "I am a soldier of the nation that is ill-treating the Jews. I am not worthy that a Jew so good as He should do anything for me." Then other thoughts came, and in his great love for the boy, and knowing that Jesus could heal him, he at last ventured to send this humble message: "O my Lord, my servant is near to die, and thou art able to save from dying. I am not worthy that Thou shouldst visit my house. But only speak the word, and he shall live. Thou art Lord of health and sickness, as I am a lord of soldiers. Say to this sickness,

'Depart,' and it will depart. Say to health, 'Go to this soldier's servant,' and health will come to him, and he shall live."

Now when Jesus received that message, a great joy came into His heart; and He said to health, "Go to that soldier's little servant, and make him well, for I have not found a heart so gentle as his master's—no, not in all Israel."

And He had no sooner spoken, out on the street, than the thing He commanded was done. Health came back to the sick boy in the soldier's house. The eye, in which there had been no light, opened; a little smile passed over the worn face as he saw his dear master still nursing him. And the gentle heart of the master swelled up in thankful joy, as he stooped down and kissed the child whom Jesus had made well again.

II.

My next vision also took me back to old times, but not so far back as my first. It was to times that were very evil I was taken. There was a wide open place in an ancient city, and a great crowd of people standing far off in a ring. Inside of the ring were priests and soldiers in black cloaks and red. In the centre was a stake of wood, with

faggots of wood piled round about it. And there chained to the stake in the midst of the faggots, was an holy man of God, whom evil priests were about to burn, not because he was bad, but because he had preached the gospel of Christ to men.

Then I saw the evil men putting a light to the faggots; and I saw that the faggots were wet, and slow to catch fire, and the slow burning of the fire was a great agony to the man at the stake. And then came to me this strange but real gleam of the Gentle Heart. Out from the crowd stepped an old woman with a bundle of dried faggots and some straw. She set them on the pile, on the side the wind was, and they blazed up at once. And I saw a look of thankfulness come over the face of the poor sufferer as he said, half speaking to God, and half to her, "Oh, holy simplicity!"

It was the holy simplicity of the Gentle Heart. She could not bear to see his slow pain. Since he was to die for Christ, for Christ's sake she shortened his suffering.

III.

That vision faded, and instead of the evil fire I saw a beautiful garden in Geneva. I saw a young

couple, with happy faces, come out of the house, come down the garden walk, and seat themselves beside a beehive. It is Hüber the student and Aimée, his beautiful wife. What we read now in books about the queen bee and the other bees, and the honey and the wax, was found out for the most part by this man. He spent his life in the study of bees. But look! he is blind. He has been blind for years. He will live till he is an old man, and be blind to the end. And yet to the end he will watch the ways and find out the secrets of the bees. And he will be able to do this because the gentle Aimée is by his side. Her friends said to her, "Do not marry Francis Hüber, he has become blind." But she said, "He therefore needs me more than ever now." And she married him, and was his happy wife and fellow-student forty years. She was eyes to the blind. She looked into the hives, and he wrote down what she saw. And she never tired of this work, and she did it with her whole soul. And the story of the bees, as it was seen and written in that garden by these two, will be read in schools and colleges when Hüber and his beautiful Aimée are themselves forgotten.

It is a hundred years ago since they began to

study the bees together, and they are both long since dead. But still shines out for me in the long helpful, patient, and loving service of Aimée, the Gentle Heart. And it was of that very heart, I am certain, her husband was thinking in his old age, when he said, "Aimée will never be old to me. To me she is still the fair young girl I saw when I had eyes to see, and who afterwards, in her gentleness, gave the blind student her life and her love."

IV.

After that I saw an island on the coast of Africa. And in the island I saw a house for lepers, with a great high wall round about it. And I beheld, when a leper or any one else entered that house, that the gates of the great walls were shut upon them, and they never more were allowed to come out. The house was filled with lepers—lepers living, lepers dying—and no one to care for their sufferings or speak to them of God. Then I beheld two Moravian missionaries bidding farewell to their friends on the shore, crossing over to the island, coming up to the gates, and passing in amongst the sick and the dying, to nurse them, to preach to them, to live with them, and never more go out from among them, till they should be carried out dead.

v.

Among my Christmas cards this year was one from a dear old friend in the north. And among my visions of the Gentle Heart was one in which he was the centre. It is a long while now since he retired from business and turned for work to his garden and his flowers. But it is nearly as long since, as he went along the crowded streets of the town in which he lives, and saw homeless boys and girls on the pavement, the thought came into his heart to gather the orphans among them into a home. So he gave only a part of his time to his garden and his flowers, and the rest to provide this home. And the home was built, and the homeless ones gathered into it—a large family now. And in that home, and for that home, my friend spends many a happy hour. He is justly looked upon as the father of the home. Yet he is so modest that his name never appears in the reports of the home, except among the names of the directors, and those who give money for its support. Once, indeed, he was taken by surprise : the other directors asked as a great favour to have his portrait for the home. And if you were going there, and asking the children whose portrait it was, they would answer, " It is the portrait of our papa."

One year, some failure in bank or railway made him much poorer, and he could not give the twenty pounds which he had given to the home each year. He might have said quite honestly, "I am sorry, but I can't afford to give my twenty pounds this year." But the gentle heart had something more in it than honesty. That very year a new flower had been brought to London from Japan, and each plant of it cost a pound. The orphans' papa sent to London for a plant, took it into his greenhouse, cut it into twenty bits, and struck a new plant out of each. Then he sold his twenty plants at one pound each. And so, that year too, there was joy in this Gentle Heart that he was still able to pay his twenty pounds to help to bless little orphan children.

VI.

Then I saw a vision of a rich man's son. In the city of Glasgow once lived a worthy merchant, whose children I knew. As God had blessed him in his buying and selling, he became a rich man. And having a great love for country life, he took his riches and bought some fields on which he had played and gathered flowers when a child, and also the mansion in which the old laird of the place was wont to live. There was just one thing he

forgot to do; he forgot to make his will, and say to whom the mansion and fields should go when he died. So by-and-by, when he died, no will could be found. Now he left behind him his wife, four daughters, and an only son. But as no will had been made, the mansion, and the fields, and a great part of all his riches, came to this only son. He was in London when the news came that his father had died, and that he was now a rich man. Just at that moment money would have been very useful to him, for he was a young merchant beginning life, and no one would have blamed him if he had said, "The money is welcome, and with it I shall push my new business on." But God had given him a Gentle Heart. He left London as soon after he got the news as he could get a train. And, although it was late in the day when he arrived at his native city, the first thing he did was to go to the house of a friend who writes out wills. And that friend, at his request, wrote out a will by which the mansion and the fields were made over to his mother all her days—and all the rest, both land and money, which his father had left, was divided, share-and-share alike, between her, his sisters, and himself. And when that was all fixed, he went to his home and buried his

father. Somebody said to him afterwards, "But why did you go that very night and have the will made out?" He said, "I that night saw that it was my duty to do it. If I had left it till next day, my duty might not have seemed so clear."

That is the way of the Gentle Heart.

VII.

One vision of a Gentle Heart came to me out of the years when I was at school. Among my class-fellows was a Jewish boy. His real name was John, but some of the bigger boys had given him the name of Isaac, and by that name he was known. He was a shy, timid-looking boy, tall and slender, with a little stoop. He was very clever at making musical toys. He used to bring pan-pipes and singing reeds and wood whistles to the school. Sometimes he brought a little flute, and in play-hours, when the bigger scholars were at their games, he would stand leaning against the wall, with a crowd of little fellows around him, whom he taught to play on his simple reeds and whistles, or to whom he played on his little flute.

I sat beside him at school, and got to know him well; and I never knew him to tell a lie, or do a base, or mean, or cruel thing. And I do not

think as much could be said of any other boy amongst us all at that school during the years when he was there. He helped the backward boys with their lessons. I have seen him oftener than once sharing his lunch with a school-fellow that had none; and although he had no quarrels of his own, he took up the quarrels of the little boys when the bullies were ill-treating them. One day he saw a big lad of fifteen beating a little fellow of eleven. "Now, Tom," he called out, "let that little fellow alone." "You mind your Jews' harps and whistles," said the bully. Isaac made no reply, but went right up to the hulking fellow, seized the wrist of the hand which had hold of the little boy, gave it a sudden twist and pinch, which loosened the hand-grip in a moment, and let the little boy free. It was done so quickly and neatly, that all the boys standing around burst into laughter at the bully. From that time the bully was Isaac's enemy and every evil trick that could be done against the Jew lad he did, and every spiteful word that could be spoken he spoke.

But it happened one afternoon, when school was over, that Isaac was standing at his father's door, and he saw a great crowd turning into the street. Boys and men were storming up, and there, in

front of them, running as if for life, and white with terror and fatigue, was the bully. He had been in some boy's prank or other, and was being chased by those who wished to punish him. Isaac saw at a glance how matters stood, and, standing back within the door and holding it open, he said, "Come in here, Tom; I'll let you out another way." And he let him out into another street. Isaac saved his bitterest enemy, and Tom escaped. It was Tom who told us all this. Isaac never referred to it. But we all noticed that Tom said as much good of the Jew boy afterwards as he had said evil before.

VIII.

But while I was thinking of these visions, as they came one by one, I found that they began to come two and three together, and at last in a crowd. And it is only little bits of what I saw after that I can now tell.

I saw a brave man plunging into a river one dark night, and saving a woman who had stumbled in; and when the friends sought him in the crowd, to thank him, he was not to be found. The brave man wanted no thanks. His reward was that he had saved a human life.

I saw a gracious man going into a bank one day,

and entering a large sum of money to the credit of a widow, who had lost husband and means the day before.

I saw a wounded soldier on the field of battle refusing the water he was thirsting for, that it might be given to one beside him who was worse wounded and needed it more.

I saw a tender lady passing from bed to bed in a hospital, and speaking cheering words to the sick people, as she did some gentle service to each. And I saw the thankful smile that came up over their wan faces as she passed.

I saw daughters refusing homes of their own, that they might wait beside their sick mothers. I saw them lovingly tending the dear sufferers as if they were queens, and counting it joy to be able in this way to show their love.

I saw a man stand up before an angry mob, and say to them, "It is falsehood you are speaking against my friend." And when they cried against him in their anger, he defended his friend the more.

I saw a brave captain on the great sea, bringing his ship close to a burning vessel crowded with human beings, and waiting beside it—risking his own ship in the flames—till the day closed, and

far on through the night, till at length every soul was saved.

And in each of these visions, and in many more that I cannot tell, what I saw was a gleam of the Gentle Heart.

IX.

At last, however, all these visions melted away, but I saw that it was into the light of a far greater vision.

I thought it was night, and I was with a crowd of people upon a great mountain. There were mountains all round, mountains below, mountains above, a great stretch of mountains, and the tops, reaching far up into the sky, were covered with snow.

We turned our faces to the mountain-tops, and we saw coming out on the peaks of the highest just the faintest little flush of light. Then it grew stronger, then red, then one by one the great snow-peaks kindled up, away up into the sky, as if some fire were shining on the snow; and indeed a fire was shining on the snow. For as we turned our faces the other way to come down the hill, we beheld the morning sun rising into the sky. It was the flame of the rising sun which we had seen shining on the lighted peaks.

Now that is just what my visions of the Gentle Heart have been,—fires kindled by a greater fire; far-off gleams of the Gentle Heart of Jesus. The gentleness I have been telling you about is just light from Him. He is the sun. They were the hill-tops, great and small, aflame with love like His love. And it was into the light of that largest love my visions faded.

Yes, His is the heart from which all hearts take their gentleness. It is from His heart all the gentleness of mothers and sisters, all the gentleness you have ever known in father, or brother, or companion, or nurse, has come. His is the gentlest heart the world has ever known, or ever can know. It is this heart which in the Bible the loving God offers to each of us. This is that new heart which will new-make you, and bless you, and bring you at last to glory. Just the heart of Jesus, the gentle, loving, merciful heart of Him who once died for us, and who still lives to help and bless us all.

SOME GENTLE DEEDS.

SOME GENTLE DEEDS.

IT is said of the things done by Jesus, that if they should be written every one, the world itself could not contain the books they should fill.

It is the same with deeds done by those who are like Jesus. They can never all be told. They are being done every day, every hour of the day, and in every country. Only one here, another there, is ever heard of. I am going to tell of two or three which I have read about or known myself.

I.

It was a gentle deed which Rahab did hundreds of years ago in Jericho. She saved the lives of two servants of God. Rahab was a poor heathen woman. She had neither Bible nor church to tell her what to do. No prophet had ever told her of God. She only knew of Him by the talk of travellers, and by the rumours of the mighty works

He had done for the children of Israel. What she knew of God, therefore, was a mere tiny spark of light, which any puff of wind might blow out. But she loved this light. She took it for her guide. And in the way it pointed out she walked.

One day God sent the two servants I have spoken of unto her house for shelter. They had come to see the land; and the king of Jericho was angry, and wanted to kill them. And he sent to Rahab, and said, "Give these men up to me that I may kill them, for they are come to spy out our land." But Rahab knew, by the light which God had kindled in her soul, that they were sent by God. And she said to herself, "I will obey God rather than the king of Jericho." So she hid the men in the roof of her house among stalks of flax which were heaped up there. Then, when night fell, she let them down by a cord from a window that looked over the wall of the city. "Flee for your lives," she said, "flee to the mountains, and remain there three days, and you shall be safe." So the men fled, as she told them, up to the mountains, and, hiding there three days, they escaped.

It was God who gave her this chance of serving Him by doing this good deed. And He also gave

her the wisdom and the heart to do it well. That which she could do, she did. That is her praise to this day.

II.

There is still living, in an English village, a venerable man, who has spent his days in preaching the gospel and doing other Christian works. When he came first to this village, he found every summer, about the same time, that many of the people sickened, and some died. Of those who died, the greatest number were children. It went to his heart to see the grief which these deaths caused,—mothers crying for the children, and children for the mothers, who had died, At last God put the thought into his mind, that there was some one evil thing which brought the sickness and the deaths. And, looking into all things to find this out, he saw that in the hot months of summer the people had no water to drink except what lay foul and bad in the ditches by the roadside. He said to himself, "The people are dying for want of pure water." Now over against that village there is a mountain, and in the sides of this mountain, far up, are springs and streams of the purest water. The minister got workmen and went up to these streams. And across the bed of

the largest stream he caused a strong wall to be built, and in this way made a deep lake behind. Then from this lake he caused pipes to be laid all the way to the streets of the village. And the villagers had wholesome water to drink. And they ceased to sicken and die as they had done.

That was a gentle and Christian deed. He brought health to his people, and a happier life into their homes.

III.

One of the best and kindest servants of God I have ever known was my beloved friend Margaret. Her life has been one long outflow of gentle deeds. And she has done deeds which were brave as well as good, which needed courage and strength as well as kindness to do. It is one of these—one out of many—I am about to tell.

In the city where her home was, is a district which is called "the woods." And in the heart of that district was an evil house, dark and dismal to look at, in which thieves and drunkards and other evil people lived, and which the neighbours in the district had named "the den."

One winter's day, a simple country girl, not yet eighteen, in search of work, knocked at the door of this house. Her mother and she had seen in

the newspaper that work was to be had in this house. And at the door, when it was opened, she asked for work. "Yes!" said the master of the house; "if you will stay here you shall have work." But it was a very wicked man who said this, and it was very wicked work he intended her to do. He was like the wolf who met little Red Riding Hood; and this was a girl like Red Riding Hood herself.

Now on that same day it came to the ears of my friend Margaret that this guileless country girl had been entrapped into the den. She knew the wickedness of the evil man who was its master, and of the thieves and vile people who lived with him in his house. She knew also that this poor girl would never more get back to her home unless she could be got out of the den at once.

It was winter weather, as I have said. The air was thick with fog, the streets deep in slush. But Margaret, having first put herself in God's hand by prayer, set out and knocked at the door of the den. "Could she see the girl who had come up from the country?" "There was no such person there," she was told. "Could she see the master?" "He had gone from home." But these were lies which she had been told. She went to the police office,

to magistrates, to ministers, to kind-hearted citizens. No one seemed able to help her. Two days in the bitter winter weather she toiled, going from street to street, from door to door, before she found the helper who cared to help. But this helper at last she found. And before the third day closed, she had rescued the innocent country girl from the den of evil; had got work for her which she could do at her mother's side; and was with her in the late train on the way back to the village home, which, but for Margaret, she never would have seen again.

IV.

The other day a poor man was brought—crushed by machinery—into a Manchester hospital. To save his life his leg had to be taken off. But when this was done, the blood rushed out so quickly that there was almost no life left in him. And the doctors said he had not strength to get better. There was but one chance for him. If new blood could be poured into his body he might still live. One of the students there said, "Let blood be taken from me." And blood was taken from him and made to pass into the body of the dying man. And the man recovered his strength and he lived. It was a great gift which this student

made to the poor stranger. It was a gift of life. He had nobleness and strength to do this very thing. It was, in the best sense, a gentle deed. That is his praise for evermore for this deed, whatever else his life may bring forth.

V.

A young mason, many years ago, had his hand crushed by a stone, and went to the Glasgow Infirmary to have it dressed. A student, unlike the one I told you of,—an ungentle student,—tore off the bandages hastily. That is a great cruelty when the hand is sore with open wounds. The pain was worse than having the hand crushed at first. And though the young lad kept down his crying when he was with the doctor, he no sooner got out than he turned into a court and sat on some steps inside where he could be out of sight, and burst into sobs. But on that stair dwelt a very gentle lady. She heard the sobbing, and came down to see the sufferer. Then she brought him into her house, spoke kindly to him,—like a mother,—made some tea for him, and told him to come to her every day before he went to have his hand dressed. And day by day this mother-hearted lady soaked the bandages in warm water, and made

them easy to come off. And this she did to this perfect stranger till the hand was well. Perhaps it does not seem a very great thing to do, but it was a very kind thing. And it was all she was able to do. She did what she could. And the young mason never forgot her kindness. He became a life-long friend to her. And when she was old and lonely he often visited her, and his visits cheered her till she died.

VI.

I knew another doer of gentle deeds, the landlady of a country inn. She was very simple. Although she was the mother of grown-up sons and daughters, it was like listening to a baby to hear her speak. Almost the only words which passed her lips were, "Ay, ay," and "No, no." But she had a kind and motherly heart. Out of that came all the gentle deeds she did. One of these I will tell.

On the other side of the street from her inn lived a poor girl, a weaver, who had neither father nor mother, nor friend nor relative in the wide world. This girl was laid down by fever, and had a long and weary illness after. At first the neighbours were very kind. They lit her fire, tidied up her room, prepared her food, and made her bed.

But weeks and months passed, and Ann was no better. And by and by the neighbours got weary of this well-doing. First one, then another, at last all except one forgot to visit poor Ann, or even to ask how she was getting on. This unforgetting one was the kind mistress of the little inn. Every day, as the clock struck four, this simple Christian woman might be seen coming out of her door with a small covered tray. Wet or dry, snow or sunshine, it was all the same. At the exact hour the lonesome Ann heard the welcome footstep on the stair, saw the latch lifted, and the gentle neighbour coming in with a pleasant smile on her face, and a large cup of hot tea and a buttered roll in her hand. She would have died but for this that her neighbour did. Many a day her only food was the tea and roll. And it was not always easy for this kind heart to do what she did. It was not easy to leave her house, which was often crowded with country people. But always she fulfilled her task of mercy. She did it cheerfully. She did it till Ann was able to come and thank her. That was her praise in God's sight.

VII.

Yet one other gentle deed comes into my memory out of a story of school life. It was a school of

black children in Jamaica. A friend of my own was master. He had made a law that every lie told in the school should be punished by seven strokes on the palm with a strap. One day Lottie Paul told a lie, and was called up to receive the seven strokes. Lottie was a poor little thing, and pain was terrible to her. But the master must enforce his law. Untruth is a very evil thing in a school, or in a child's life. So Lottie had to hold out her hand and receive the seven strokes. But her cry of pain when she had received the first went to the master's heart. He could not go on with her punishment. He could not pass by her sin. And this is what he did. He looked to the forms on which the boys were seated, and asked, "Is there any boy will bear the rest of Lottie's punishment?" And as soon as the words were out of his lips, up started a bright little fellow called Jim, and said, "Please, sir, I will!" And he stepped from his seat, stepped up to the desk, and received, without a cry, the six remaining strokes.

What moved this brave boy to bear Lottie's punishment? It was the gentle heart. And it was the vision of a heart gentler still, but gentle with the same kind of gentleness which filled the master's eyes with tears that day, and made him

close his books, and bring his scholars round about his desk, and tell them of the Gentle One, who long ago bore the punishment of us all.

It is pleasant to tell of gentle deeds. It is far more pleasant to be able to do them. But it is delightful to know that Christ the Lord is helping people every day to do them. And every day He is sending chances of doing them to our very doors. And the gentle deeds He gives us the chance of doing are not high and difficult things, which only great people and strong people can do, but humble, homely, little things which boys and girls, and even little children can do.

A NEIGHBOUR.

A NEIGHBOUR.

IN the days of the great King Agathos many wonderful things took place. Young men saw visions, and old men dreamed dreams. Many that were poor became rich; many that were rude became gentle; and towns and villages that were almost deserted and in ruins were rebuilt and filled with happy crowds.

Just on the outskirts of this great King's kingdom, in a hollow among lofty hills, lay one of those ruined villages. Everything in it had a broken-down and decaying look. The houses were old and mean and bare; grass grew upon the streets; and the inhabitants were ignorant and sad and poor.

One morning, in early spring, a stranger entered this village. It was noticed that he walked from one end of the main street to the other, looking to this side and to that, at the houses; but more

eagerly still into the faces of the people who were passing by.

The labourers began to come out from their homes to go into the fields : the stranger examined every face as it passed. A little while after, the young women came out to the wells for water : the stranger went up to these and questioned them one by one. By-and-by, he turned aside to a blind old man, who sat at his door to enjoy the heat of the morning sun, and he put many questions to him. But neither the old man nor the young women could give him the information he wished. A look of distress and disappointment came into his face. The villagers saw him turning away into a back street that had long since been deserted. Then they noticed that he sat down on the stones of an old wall, with his face towards a roofless cottage, which had neither window, nor fireplace, nor door.

This was the cottage in which the stranger was born, and in which he had spent his early years. As he sat gazing on its ruins, the old forms he had known so well in his boyhood seemed to come back again. He saw his father working among the flower-beds in the garden ; and his mother, now knitting and now cooking, beside the

kitchen-fire. The very laughter of his brother and sisters, as he had so often heard it long ago, seemed to come back again and fill his ears like a song. And there came back also the memory of a day when that laughter was stilled; and along with that, the form of a beautiful sister, who on that day was carried out to her grave. Tears began to trickle down his cheeks.

And then, one of the strange things I mentioned at the outset happened. Behind the cottage rose up the great sides of the hills among which the village was nestled. Far up the huts of shepherds could be seen like little dots scattered here and there; and on the green pastures, flocks of sheep. As the stranger was gazing across the roofless and broken walls of his early home, his ear caught little snatches of a song which some one was singing among the hills behind. Then he beheld the singer—a little girl—stepping down as if she were coming from the shepherds' huts. Her feet were bare, but she stepped downwards as if she had wings. Her yellow hair was blown out behind her with the wind. She was coming directly to the stranger, and almost before he knew, she was at his side, and singing the song he had heard—

"Friend and brother wouldst thou find?
Hearts of love around thee bind?
Be thyself a heart of home;
To gentle heart, hearts gentle come."

Then she stopped singing, and fixing her eyes earnestly on him, said, "You are in pain, my brother?" And although she was but a little child, and one he did not remember to have seen before, the stranger could not help opening his heart to her.

"I have come from the most distant shores of our King's country to find my brother and sisters, and they are not here. When I left this village I was poor. I am rich now, and would share my riches with them, if I could find them."

While the stranger was speaking the little girl seemed to grow more and more beautiful. Her eyes shone like bits of the blue of the sky, and sent their glance into his very soul. As the morning sunlight fell on her hair it seemed like a crown of gold around her head. And then, as she stood before him there, in her exceeding beauty, it flashed upon him that somewhere or other in other years, he must have seen that face. And then, in a moment more, he knew that this was the very face of the dear sister who had died.

Then she said, "Come with me, brother; your brother and sisters are found."

She took him by the hand and led him back into the main street of the village, and said—"Do you see that blind old man whom you questioned? That is your father."

"But my father is dead these many years."

Without stopping to answer him, the beautiful child went on—do you see those young women you spoke to coming from the wells with water? They are your sisters."

"But my sisters must be old and grey-headed now."

And once more, without replying to him, the child said—"Do you see those labourers in the fields, whose faces you looked into so eagerly? They are your brothers."

"But I had only one brother."

While he was saying this the children began to go past to school.

"And there," exclaimed his young companion, pointing to them, "are your children."

The stranger was perplexed. Everything about him seemed to swim in the morning light. The children, the young women, the labourers, and the blind old man appeared as if they were drawn

up into the light. And into the same light the beautiful form of his child sister also passed, smiling towards her brother with a tender grace, and singing her gentle song. And then everything disappeared.

When he came to himself he was still sitting on the stones of the broken wall. The roofless cottage was on the other side of the way, but the little girl was gone. And from where he sat he could see neither children nor grown-up people of the village.

He was never quite certain about what had taken place. Sometimes he fancied he had fallen asleep, and had dreamed a happy dream. Sometimes it seemed as if he had seen a vision, and as as if the beautiful child stepping down the hillside with her song and her words of teaching had been real. But nobody else had seen her; and the shepherds in the huts did not know of such a child.

But whether what he saw and heard was real, or only a dream, it was the turning point of life to this rich stranger.

The song of the fair-haired child took possession of his heart, and by means of it God changed his heart, and made it gentle and neighbourly; and the light of the neighbourly heart came into his

eyes, and he saw in the ruined village a new world and new duties there for himself. Long afterwards he used to tell that he saw that day what John had seen in the Isle of Patmos—"a new heaven and a new earth." He knelt beside the ruined cottage and lifted up his heart to God, and said, "O my Father, let the heart that was in Thy Son Jesus be also in me! All that I have is Thine; from Thee it came, to Thee it shall return. Help me to fulfil Thy will."

He rose up a new man. He said to himself, "I will abide in this village, and build up its ruined walls, and make the people of it the sharers of my wealth."

So he abode in the village; and he became a neighbour to old and young. The inhabitants became his children, and his brothers and his sisters, and his parents. And light arose in their dwellings, and prosperity came back into their streets, and songs to their lips. The rich man was happy, and the poor were blessed; and in his old age, when young people were setting out in life, and came up to him for his blessing, he used to repeat to them the song which the fair-haired child of his vision had sung to him, and call it "the secret of a happy life."

Long years have passed since those things took place. The ruined village is now a large and prosperous city ; but in the centre of it stands to this day a granite cross with the portrait of a beautiful child cut on the stem, and underneath, the words of the song—

> "Friend and brother wouldst thou find ?
> Hearts of love around thee bind ?
> Be thyself a heart of home ;
> To gentle heart, hearts gentle come."

That is the monument of the rich stranger who shared his riches with the people of the ruined village. His name is unknown. But in the histories of the city you will find that the founder of its prosperity is described as "the man with the neighbourly heart."

ON DOING WHAT WE CAN.

ON DOING WHAT WE CAN.

NOBODY is idle in the kingdom of our Lord. Even the babes and sucklings have something to do. But so just is the King that He will not have any of His servants do more than they can. He expects us to do only what we can.

"What we can." That is His measure for all work done to Him. What we have strength for, what we have health for, what we have cleverness for, what we have time for, what we have means for: that and nothing more. He will have us work up to that, but no higher.

He must have been thinking of little people and children when He made this the measure of work. Almost it is as if He had said, "I will not make My service hard to any one, but least of all to the little ones of My kingdom."

I.

It was this which pleased Him so well in the service which Mary of Bethany did: she did what she could. She greatly loved the Lord. He had often spoken to her about His Father. He had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. And she wanted to show her love.

She took this way of showing it. All the money she could spare she spent on a box of sweet-scented oil. And one Sabbath evening—the last Sabbath before His death—the Lord was in Bethany and at supper in the house of Simon, Mary came in with her box. And going near to Jesus, she did to Him what was only done to kings and great people—she poured the sweet-scented oil upon His head and over His feet. And then, in her great love, she wiped His feet with her hair.

It was not much to do. To look at, it was not so much as if she had built a church, or a school, or a hospital. It was not even so much, Judas said angrily, as if she had sold the ointment and given the money to the poor. It was only pouring some sweet perfume on the head and feet of the Saviour she loved. But just this was the thing she could best do; and what she could she did. Of all His disciples then living, only into the heart of

this one had come the thought to do this thing. She had love so great for Jesus, and He had become so truly her King, that it seemed to her a blessed work to buy the oil and pour it upon His head. She would have done more if she could; but this was in her heart to do, and it was done. The Lord did not despise it, or think it a little thing. When Judas and others were blaming her, He said, "She hath wrought a good work upon Me . . . She hath done what she could." He praised her. And then, in His kindness, and praising her still more, He said, "that what she had done would be talked of wherever His Gospel should be preached." And so it has fallen out. That evening the fragrance of her ointment filled the house where they were sitting; and its fragrance, in a still better way—the good influence that was in it—has filled the house of the Lord ever since.

II.

When years had gone past, and Jesus was gone back to heaven, many other disciples showed their love to Him by doing what they could. Some sold their possessions, and gave the money they got for them to the poor. Some went about the world preaching Jesus. Some opened their houses

to receive the preachers. Some spent long hours in prayer, asking God to bless the preaching. Some, more noble than others, searched the Bible besides, to know what God would have them to do.—Among these was Dorcas of Joppa.

Joppa was a seaport town, and full of sailors; and where sailors are there will also be women and children who are poor. Often ships went out from the harbour that never came back. They were caught by storms and sunk far out at sea, or they were driven shoreward and broken on the rocks. And day after day mothers and children on the shore would look with straining eyes to the sea for white sails which could never more be seen. And sometimes, when all hope had perished of seeing these sails again, the streets would be filled with wailing. And sometimes, it might be, widows would go past the door where Dorcas lived, wringing their hands in agony, because news had come to them, that the fathers of their children had been swallowed up by the terrible sea.

And seeing these poor people by day, and lying awake, perhaps, sometimes on stormy nights and thinking of brave sailors perishing, even then, at sea, this Christian lady said to herself, "Can I do anything to help?" And taking herself to task,

she found there was one thing she could do. She could sew. She could make coats and garments—upper and under clothes. There was another thing she could do, although she herself might not think of that. She had a heart filled with tenderness and pity. She could let forth some of that pity and tenderness on the poor people in their sorrow. And these two things she did. She drew the poor widows about her by her love. And with her own hands she made clothing for them and theirs. To some people, it might not seem a very great work. It was only a little sewing and some human love; only a kind word for sad hearts and clothing for the naked. But that is work which is very dear to Christ. And it was work of this kind He had given her the power to do. And what she could, she did. And of so much worth seemed her work in the eyes of Jesus, that when she died early, and the poor widows she had clothed cried to Him, through Peter, to let their dear one—their friend—come back to them, He granted their prayer, and by the hands of His servant Peter raised her up again to life.

III.

Sometimes we can only sing a psalm, or offer a prayer, or speak a kind word, or give a tender look,

or a warm grasp of the hand. It is enough in the eyes of the just Saviour that we do things as little as these, if these should be the only things we can do.

I am reminded, while I speak, of two workers for Christ, I once knew, who gained their bread in a cotton mill, and served Him in a very simple way. One of these, her companions used to call "the gentle Mary." She was a Roman Catholic. She was very tender about sick people, and spent what she could spare of her evenings, after mill hours, in visiting them. She had a way of speaking to the sick that did them good. Not that she was a great speaker. Often she would only say to them, "Jesus loves you." Sometimes she just pressed their hands. Sometimes she bent over them and kissed them. She never went on these visits of kindness without taking something she thought the sick people would like. It would be a little jelly one time; and a little scent-bottle next time; and now and again it would be a flower, or a little wine. The door was open for Mary into many a home where these things were to be had for the asking. I am happy to be able to add, that Mary was as gentle and loving at her own fireside, as in the homes of the sick.

It was another kind of service to which the second girl had given herself. One winter evening she was going home from the factory, and in the light falling from a street lamp on the pavement she found a sixpenny copy of the New Testament. It was the first time she had a Testament of her own. She took it home and began to read, and as she read, she learned, as she had never done before, the wonder of the Saviour's love, and how He had died to prove that love. She said to herself, "I shall not have this joy to myself alone." So she set apart, out of her small earnings, one penny every day for Christ's cause. And at the end of each week she bought and gave to some one who had none, a copy of the book which had been such a joy to herself.

It was not much either of these girls did. It was not much either had the power to do. But each did what she could: that was their praise before God.

That was the praise also of a young lady, I was once taken to see, whose service seemed even less than theirs. She had been thrown from a carriage ten years before, and all those years had been ill and in bed. But her hands were free. And with her free hands she knit little gloves for poor

children. It was only helping to keep warm some little fingers that would otherwise have been very cold in winter. But it was all she was able to do. And it was done with a loving heart, and as a service to the Lord.

IV.

No one is so humble, or poor, or weak, as not to be able to do something. Even a child can serve the Lord.

A few years back, on a Friday morning in September, three tiny little children in Australia went into a wood to fetch some broom for their mother. It was a beautiful day. The ground was covered with flowers, and the children set themselves to gather them. But when they were tired with this, and had prepared the little bundle for home, they could no longer tell on what side home was to be found. And Frank, the youngest of the three, was worn out. Taking him up in her arms, the sister and other brother looked on every side for a way out, but could not find one. Mile after mile those weary feet pattered, and every mile was taking them farther from home. They cried for father and mother. "Cooey, Cooey, Cooey," they called; but all in vain. There was no human ear to hear their cries. At last night began to fall. The sis-

ter looked for a sheltering bush. Then she knelt down with her other brother and said her evening prayer,—

> "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
> Look upon a little child."

Then the two laid down beside Frank and went to sleep. And this was repeated on Saturday, on Sunday, on Monday, and Tuesday, the poor weary wanderers still carrying the broom for their mother, still looking for the home which they could not find, and eating berries and leaves for food. By-and-by the beautiful weather came to an end and rain poured down, and when night came Frank was cold as well as weary. The sister took off her frock, and, wrapping the child in that, they once more took shelter under a bush. It was nine days altogether before they were found. Father, mother, neighbours, shepherds, farmers, miners, everybody in the neighbourhood searched for them. But some natives, going down on their knees, and looking for the marks of tiny feet on the wet ground, were the first to come on their track. On Saturday, led by these poor blacks, their father found them lying asleep under a bush, and nearly dead with weariness and hunger and cold. The first words the girl said when she was roused up

were "cold, cold," and the next, after she had been taken to a hut and warmed and fed, were the words of her Evening Hymn.

The brave little mother that she was! The brave self-forgetting servant of Christ! She had cheered her brothers all the time. She had searched about for food for them. She carried Frank when he was tired. She wrapped him in her own dress when he was cold. And at night, when they went to sleep under the shelter of some bush, she drew them together and said her evening prayer.

That was her praise before God and man: she had done what she could.

V.

It is wonderful how much can be done, and what things great in God's sight, if people would only do the little things they can.

On one of the early days of a January not long ago, a Swedish steamer was wrecked on the Northumberland coast. The fisher folk of Cresswell, a village near by, looking seaward that day, saw the strange vessel among the breakers, and knew that human lives were in peril. It is a little place, with only fifteen men in it, and of these two were un-

able to work. But men and women and children turned out that day and hauled down and launched the lifeboat, and, very soon, thirteen brave fellows were struggling with the wild sea to save the lives on the wreck. But the storm was too fierce. They were driven back again and again. While they were waiting for a lull in the storm to try again, some one said, "Let us send for the rocket." The rocket is used when the lifeboat cannot get near. It is shot up into the air, with a line of cord attached, so that the cord falls over the vessel, and those on board catch it and pull in a rope tied to the end of it, and make that fast, and come sliding one by one to land by the rope. But the machine for firing the rocket was at Newbiggin, five miles away, and the night was closing in. Would anybody go to Newbiggin? A young girl stepped forward. She would go. And in a moment she was gone. The lives of human beings depended on her speed. She ran, rather she flew. Like the fisher-girl she was, she kept the shore road, and to gain time took many a short cut through the bays on the way. The wild sea was on the one side drenching her with its spray; on the other, was the wild lonesome land, and above and around her the deepening night. But

on she flew, this young angel of mercy, between rocks and waves, through the surf, through the moaning of the storm, through the darkness, till she gave her message at Newbiggin, and saw the rocket on its way. And then, alone as before, and once more through darkness, sea-wave, and storm, she fled back over the same five lonesome miles to bring the good news to Cresswell, that the rocket was on the way. It did not lessen the worth of what she had done that meanwhile the lifeboat had succeeded in its next attempt, and brought the wrecked people safe to land. Her deed was well done and heroic. She was ill next day, ill and cramped all over in bed. No wonder. But she had done a brave, noble, Christian deed, and done it well. It is fine to be able to tell that she comes of a good stock, for her father was steersman of the lifeboat that day. And for father and child, and for all in Cresswell who worked so well, it may surely be said, "They wrought a good work, they did what they could."

OF NOT DOING WHAT WE CAN.

OF NOT DOING WHAT WE CAN.

THE last time I spoke to you, I tried to set before you the good which there is in doing what we can. To do what one can is all that our Lord asks us to do. And it is very pleasant to know that this is all He asks us to do. It is like having His heart opened to us, and seeing how tender He is to little folks and children, and to people not strong, and poor people. And I really think it was to let us see this tenderness of His heart for the little ones that He made this His praise of Mary: "She hath done what she could."

I.

But to this lesson there are two sides. And it is right to know that the same kind Lord Who has made this easy measure for little workers, expects all His workers, big and little, to work

up to it and do for Him as much as they are able. He will not lay upon any of us more than we can do. But what we can, He will always have us to do. He does not love idlers, nor people who run away from duty. He told this story to let us know the evil of not doing what we can:—

There was once a merchant who had to go to a far country. And he called his servants and said to them: "Here is money, and when I am away you are to trade with it and make more, and when I come back, I will reckon with you." And he gave one ten pounds, one five, and to a third he gave one. When he came back, after a long while, the servant who got ten pounds said: "I traded with your ten pounds, and I have made other ten;" and the servant who got five said, "And I have made other five." The master was well pleased with them. But the servant who had got only one, said: "I was afraid lest I should lose your money, and have a scolding from you, so I hid it, and here it is safe." With that servant the master was very angry. He said to him, "You ought not to have buried my pound; you should have traded with it, and made it into two pounds." It was for this the master was angry. The

servant was an idler. He did not do what he could.

II.

And that is always and for all mankind an evil thing. And sometimes it is as cruel as it is evil.

I will tell you a little bit of the life of a boy I knew. He was not a bad boy. He was far from it. He loved good people and things that were good. He would not have told a lie, or knowingly done a mean or cruel thing. Yet once he did a thing that was very cruel through forgetting to do what he could. A friend had made him a present of a blackbird. At first, there was no end to his joy. This was his own bird: its cage was his; its song was his; and it was to him the bird looked for its food. And for a long while he was very good to it. He kept green things between the wires, and brought fresh water to its drinking glass, and kept the cage clean and sweet; and always when he came in, he would go up to the cage and speak to it and cheer it, and sometimes he would rise from his lessons and have a little talk with his bird.

It happened that the boy's mamma took ill,

and the song of the blackbird became a pain to her. So the cage was taken up to an attic room. It happened at the same time that the game of base-ball came in, and my little friend was very fond of that game. He got to care for this game so much that his care for the lonely blackbird grew less and less. He had no time now for little talks with the bird. He did not gather green food for it, or bring it fresh water as he used to do. At last, one day he forgot it altogether. He had to hurry off to school as soon as he rose next day. In the afternoon his classmates took him off to the playground. He came back so hot and tired and so late that he could only get to bed. His poor bird went out of his thoughts entirely. And when, two or three days after, some one in the family said, "Harry, how is your blackbird getting on?" a pang shot through Harry's heart. He jumped up, ran to the attic where he had left it, and found it lying at the bottom of the cage quite dead. By his forgetfulness and neglect and not doing what he could, he had killed his beautiful bird.

III.

And it is not birds only that are neglected in this way.

A poor old lady, who lived where I once lived, had some trouble in one of her eyes. Scales seemed to grow over it, and she could not see. The village doctor said to her, "It is but a little thing, and it can be healed." They sent her to an hospital in the neighbouring city, and the doctors there said, "Yes, it is a little thing, and your eye shall get quite well." So she said a silent prayer to God, and put herself in their hands. They took a knife and cut the scales away. And she felt the touch of the light on her eye, and said joyfully, "I see with this eye again." The doctors wrapped up the eye, and said to a nurse, "Nurse, this patient must remain in a dark room for two weeks; at the end of this time she should be well enough to go home."

It was the duty of the nurse to whom these words were said, to attend to all whose eyes had been cut, and put them at once into a warm bed, and give them food. She took this old lady to a dark room, and said, "Rest here; I will be back in a moment and put you to bed." But moment after moment passed, and she did not come back. Hour after hour, and still she did not come. She had forgotten all about her. At last, in the evening, she remembered her neglect,

and ran up to the room where the old lady was. But it was too late. The day had been cold. The poor lady was cold, and sick, and faint. When she was put to bed she began to shiver. A fever set in; then inflammation of the eye that had been cut; then inflammation of the eye that was well. And when the sickness left her, both eyes were blind.

What had taken place? A very evil thing. This nurse had not done what she could; and, failing to do that, she had made her poor sick patient blind for life.

IV.

I try to think that this nurse only forgot. I try to think that the evil she did—and what she did was very evil—was because she did not think as much as she ought to have done about her duties. But I have known of some who brought suffering on others just as she did, by not doing what they could, and who have tried to hide the evil they did by running away from the suffering they caused.

One dark night a few years ago, an emigrant ship, with four hundred people on board, was lying in the Channel on the eve of sailing to

Hobart Town far away. And in the darkness, without stroke of warning, it was crashed into by a steamer and sunk. A dark night, I said, only a few stars twinkling, and those four hundred human beings were folded up in sleep. And in the darkness, and while they slept, there was this crash. And in a moment death was rushing in through the broken sides of the vessel, and almost instantly the vessel began to sink. Fathers, mothers, little babies, sailors, awoke only to be swallowed up in the yawning sea. It was one of the most pitiful things that could be—and very pitiful were the cries of the poor sufferers as they were going down into the deep. One mother came up to one on deck and cried, "For the love of God, save my baby!" But the baby and mother had both to die. A father and two sons met in the water. The elder son said, "Father, let me kiss you for my last; for we shall all be drowned." And all were drowned. The brave captain sent his young wife into one of the boats; but he himself remained to help and die at his task.

And while this was going on, and the crowded ship was settling down, what was the steamer that had given the stroke of death doing? It is shameful to have to tell it. But the steamer that

caused those deaths steamed past, and on into the darkness. And human hands that might have helped, and a vessel that might have saved hundreds of lives, went cruelly past "on the other side."

The officers of that ship did not what they could. They could have taken better care; they could have had a better outlook; they could have kept further off. And when they had, what should have been a great grief to them, the grief of striking the ship in their path, they should have stopped and done all that human beings could do to save the lives in the ship. The Lord's measure applied to them is this: "They wrought an evil work, and did not what they could to repair it."

And at the great judgment day that will be a terrible sorrow for them and all who have done as they did. The people who shall be condemned that day will be people who could have worked for God, and did not, and who had talents, and did not use them.

And we should all know, and lay it to heart now, that the things which the Lord will ask us about on that day are all simple things, and things easy to do. And the condemnation on

those who shall be condemned will be because those easy things were not done. They could have helped when help was needed; they could have had pity on the blind; they could have saved the drowning from death; they could have given bread to the hungry, or water to the thirsty, or clothes to the naked, or pity to the sick, or help to the prisoner. And surely it will be very awful to hear the gracious and loving Jesus saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

CHRIST'S LETTERS.

CHRIST'S LETTERS.

I.

IS there anything in the world more wonderful than a letter? When the English missionaries first went to Africa, nothing surprised the black people more than the letters they wrote. "Does the person you write to hear you speak?" said a chief to one of the missionaries. "No." "Does he see your lips move?" "No." Then he ranged a long line of his people in a field, asked the missionary to stand at one end, and stood with a second at the other end. "Now write what I bid you." The missionary beside him put down the chief's words, and the bit of paper was passed on by a messenger to the other end. At that end the missionary standing there read the words to the messenger. The messenger repeated them to the chief, and the chief cried out, "It is just magic!"

And a letter is really a kind of magic. It is

only a sheet of paper with some signs on it. But it tells what is going on ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand miles away. Through these signs, we, sitting at our breakfast tables, can see homes over wide seas, and the people living in them, and baptisms, and marriages, and sick-beds and funerals. By these signs commands come from far countries, and merchants in this land rise and go to the market, or the exchange, or the bookstore, or the house of a neighbour, and do the biddings of those who wrote them down. And by these signs the secrets of one heart are carried into another; and two hearts know the secrets instead of one.

II.

The LORD has always been a letter writer. He has written His letters on the blue sky and on the green earth. Summer and winter, springtime and harvest are sentences from one of His letters. He wrote ten words once, thousands of years ago, on sheets of stone at Mount Sinai, and those words are read still in every part of the earth. He has written two long letters to men in the Bible: the one is called the Old Testament, the other the New Testament, and those letters have been copied thousands of times and are being sent to and fro among all the nations of mankind.

But from the beginning He said: "It is not enough for Me that I write on the sky and the field, or on leaves of stone, or paper. I want something better still to write My letters on. I will only be satisfied when men allow Me to write My letters on their hearts; and when I can lay My heart with all its secrets on the hearts of men and women and boys and girls, and leave the imprint of these secrets there."

It was this His prophets said so often in the old times. They said that a day would come, a happy day, when God would write His laws no more on tables of stone, as the Ten Commandments were, but on the heart. That day came when Jesus came. He made His words go into the hearts of those who listened to Him. It was all the same as if He had written on their hearts, and these hearts had become Letters from Christ.

So Paul gives that name to the boys and girls and the men and women who have let Christ write the secrets of His heart on theirs. He calls them epistles of Christ--letters written on the fleshly leaves of the heart. And there is nothing better in the world for a boy or girl than to be a letter of this kind for Christ.

III.

Some years ago the people living in Paris were surrounded by the German army, and could neither get out themselves, nor have anybody coming in. They were besieged by that army, and all the while the siege lasted neither bread, nor milk, nor coals, nor wood, nor horse, nor cow could get in. It was a hard time, and the people suffered for want of food. But there was another thing they greatly suffered for want of—and that was news of dear ones in other parts of the world. At last those dear ones wrote letters on the first page of the *Times* newspaper in London. Then a photographer made a copy of that first page so small that it was only the size of a penny stamp. Then those tiny pages were tied under the wings of doves and carried by them over the heads of the German army into Paris. There the photographers made the tiny papers large again. And in this way the people in Paris got letters from the dear ones far away.

The Lord Jesus does something like this in writing His letters on young hearts. He has a great deal to say: but the hearts of children are too small to receive all His words. So the Lord makes His letter small, so small that it can all be

printed on a child's heart. And then as years go on and the body grows tall, the heart grows larger and larger, and the letters grow with the growth of the heart, and when boys and girls come to be young men and women they find that the loving Jesus has written nearly all the Bible on their hearts.

IV.

But sometimes it is only a single sentence He writes. During a very cold winter, between twenty and thirty years ago, there were two stories in the newspapers which went to every heart. A poor actor left Inverness for the town of Cromarty, where he was engaged to play. He had his little girl with him, a child of seven or eight. Snow had already begun to fall when he set out. But by and by a storm arose, and the snow fell so thickly that all the sky became dark with it, and the poor travellers lost their way. In a day or two, half way to Cromarty, at a lonely turn of the road, where there was some shelter, the two were found buried in the snow, and dead. But it was noticed that the child was wrapped round with the father's overcoat, which he had taken from himself to keep her warm.

The cold was so great that year that many poor

people died of it in their very houses, where they had neither fire nor food. Among those who died was a lonely mother in one of our cities. She was found cold dead on the floor of her home, and nearly naked, but beside her was her living child, living and warm, well wrapped up in the clothes which the mother had taken from her own body.

What were those two: the poor actor who stripped himself of his coat to keep warm his child: the poor mother who went nearly naked to keep her baby alive? They were letters written by Christ and sent out to be read of all, letters written with one of the deepest secrets of His heart. What He wrote on those two hearts was sacrifice, pity, love, like God's. Just as those two acted, Christ would have acted if He had been in their places. It was even so He did act, when on the cross He died for man. He took His own life and wrapped us round with it, that we might not die but live. And He would have every one of us to act to others as He acted towards us. And on our hearts, as on the hearts of those two of whom I have told, He desires to write pity and self-sacrifice, and kindness and love.

v.

I shall never forget the winter in which those

two died. I had gone to reside in a little country town among the hills, and a great snowstorm came on the very first week I was there. Day and night the snow continued to fall. The roads were blocked up, the stage coaches could not leave. At last the little town was cut off from the rest of the world. It so happened that I had promised to be at a meeting in a neighbouring town about eight miles off. And I wanted to fulfil my promise. So I got a friend to help me to find the way, and with a second friend who was staying with me we set forth. The whole country, far as the eye could see, was one unbroken sheet of snow. The roads were buried. The very hedgerows were not to be seen. Not a foot mark, nor track of a wheel was to be seen. We were the first since the snow began to attempt the journey.

When we had worked our way about three miles, we saw one other traveller coming towards us. It was the letter-carrier with the mail-bag for the town we had left. We could not help thinking him a wonderful sight. There was no other being on that white waste of snow. But what he represented was more wonderful than himself. He represented the government of the country. Humble though he was, he was a public

servant. Thousands of other servants, on other hills, on other roads, would be doing the same service which he was trying to do. Then we thought of the letters in his bag. Then of the letters in other bags. Then of all those letters as filled with things interesting one way or other to those who should receive them. And we thought of the government as the power which was sending them all on to the persons to whom they were addressed.

And then this thought came into our minds: There is a greater government than ours—the government of God—and that too is sending forth over all the land—throughout all the world—letters written not on paper with ink, but on the hearts of men and women and boys and girls, and written by Christ Himself. Then we remembered the words in second Corinthians: "The epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

VI.

It was Paul who wrote those words. It is very helpful always when Paul says a word like this to know why he says it. He was sending a letter to Christian people in Corinth to whom he had often

preached. But he knew that there were some among them who did not care for his preaching, and also had spoken evil about himself. He did not like to have evil spoken about him: no good man does. But Paul did not like it because evil words spoken about him were all the same as if they were spoken against the gospel he preached. And as he is writing, this comes into his mind, and he stops for a moment and asks himself: Shall I reply to the evil words? But he does not reply to them. He only began his writing again, and says: "Do I really need to defend myself before you? Do you know me so little that I should have to bring a letter of commendation to you? Must I get other people to tell you that I am not a bad man? Surely that cannot be needful when I am writing to my Corinthian friends. You are written on my heart; I am written on yours. You are my best letter of commendation. If anybody speaks ill of me I appeal to you and to your Christian life. It was through me Christ made you Christian. He wrote the secrets of His heart on your lives; and I, unworthy although some think me, was His penman when He did so. You are epistles of Christ, living epistles, and it was my preaching which Christ used to make you that."

No evil speaker could answer back to that. A Christian life is like a letter filled with the words of Christ. If the people to whom Paul had preached were now like Christ, it was a proof that Christ Himself had written that likeness on their hearts.

VII.

A dear friend of mine when she was a little girl went to live at Cape Breton. At that time letters arrived but once a month from this country. There was no post office to leave the bags at: there was only a great open road through the forest, and little foot-roads from the village leading up to it. The letter-carrier as he passed each of these foot-roads got out the letters from his bag which were to go that way, and dropped them into a box that was fixed on a tree. Then somebody came up from the village with a key and opened the box and took the letters away. It was my friend who had this duty to do. She had a long walk of many miles before she came to the end of the narrow foot-road, then she opened the box, and often, she used to tell, the tears would come into her eyes when there were no letters, or letters with black borders; and when she got letters, and took them back, and sometimes found

that one now and again was unpleasant or silly everybody was vexed.

I sometimes think that a school is like that letter box in the forest. There are children at school who are like silly letters, or empty letters, and sometimes like bad letters. And I think it is so sad—it is just like my friend at Cape Breton coming miles through the lonely forest for letters and finding none, or finding only letters that were bad—when a young boy or girl is sent to a school, and finds no one there on whose heart Jesus has written His tenderness, or truth, or love. But it is a blessing which words cannot tell, when coming to a school, the young comer finds hearts and lives on which Christ has written His love.

You remember the story in "Tom Brown's School Days" about the gentle boy who knelt down the first night he came to say his prayers, and the rude fellows who made a mock of him? But he found one there on whose heart Christ had written, who stood up for him. And a great blessing came into the school through this one gentle boy, and that other brave lad who defended him, being epistles written by Christ. What was written on their hearts came to be written by-and-by on the hearts of those who had mocked.

I will give you therefore a prayer to offer up at school. Say to God: "O my Father, blot out folly if Thou seest it written on my heart; blot out everything there that is a grief to Thee, and write Thy name and law instead; and make me a clear, well-filled epistle, to tell of the goodness I have found in Thee."

ON PUTTING THE RIGHT THING FIRST.

ON PUTTING THE RIGHT THING FIRST.

IT is a great thing in a child's life to know the first thing to seek after. It is greater still, when that is known, to seek that first thing first.

What most people do is to seek some second thing first, and the first thing second, or not at all.

Now there are just two things in life which people seek after. These are right things and nice things. And of these two, the first to seek after is the right thing; the second is the nice or pleasant thing.

In the sermon on the mount, our Lord, speaking of those two things, says—Seek the right thing first, and the pleasant things will come after. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things," all pleasant things, things like food and clothing, "shall be added

unto you." It is the same as if He had said, Seek first what ye ought to seek, and God will send you what you would like to get. The right things, the things of God, and of heaven, and of the soul, first; the pleasant things, the things of the world, of earth, and of the body, next. God, religion, duty, first; honour, health, happiness, next.

I.

The great King Solomon began life by seeking the best things first. He had sought knowledge and wisdom from the prophet Nathan when a boy. And when he was made king, hardly out of his boyhood, he began his reign by seeking the help of God. One of his first acts as a king was to take his great captains, judges, and counsellors up to the hill Gibeon, to ask this help from God.

It must have been a great sight, the beautiful young king in his royal robes, the soldiers in their armour, the counsellors and judges in their robes of honour, as they went up the sides of the hill to the place of prayer. Priests were there with sheep and oxen for the sacrifice. There still was the old tent which had gone with the people in all their wanderings. There also was the brazen altar which Bezaleel had made for Moses long before in

the wilderness. The air was filled with the clang of trumpets as the king and his mighty men went up. Then rose from the brazen altar the smoke of the sacrifices. "A thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar." A beautiful sight! But the beautiful thing at the heart of it all was this—that it was a young king beginning his life as a king by seeking the best things first.

On the night which followed that day of prayer, Solomon was asleep in Gibeon. And God came to him in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." And even in the dream of the night, the heart of the young king went out towards the best things. He remembered that the kingdom he was called to rule over was a great kingdom, and he was still a mere lad. So he said,—"I am but a little child, yet, O Lord. I know not how to go out, or come in. And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered, nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, Thy servant, an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great people?"

Now that was the right thing to seek. It was therefore the best thing. And Solomon sought that

best thing first and received it. And God "added" the pleasant things. He gave him riches, and honour, and long life besides. "Because thou hast asked this thing"—this best, right thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, or riches, or the life of thine enemies, behold . . . I have also given thee what thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days." It happened to him just as our Lord says: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things," food and clothing, and a happy life, and honour, "shall be added unto you."

II.

Now Solomon had a brother who took the other plan. It was his brother Absalom. He was an elder brother, but not a wiser brother. This brother put the pleasant thing, the thing he would like, first. And he put the right thing second.

The thing he thought pleasant, and put first, was to be king on his father's throne. He kept saying to himself, "Oh, if I were only king!" He was a very beautiful man. And it was part of his beauty that he had a fine head of long and

curly hair. And he was proud of this hair, and sometimes would dress it, and show himself to the people. At last he thought his hair would help him to become king. So one day he dressed it, and put on his princely robes, and sat at one of the gates of Jerusalem, and as the people went out and in, he kept saying, "If I were king things should go better with you all."

Now that was a very pleasant thing to wish for, to be king. But just then, and for Absalom, it was not a right thing. For his father David was still living. And he was still king. And the right thing for Absalom, his son, was to honour and obey his father, so long as that father lived. But he did not honour his father. He wished his father dead and away. His one wish, the wish he put first among all the wishes of his heart, was to be king in his father's place. Often he would look at himself in a mirror and say, "What a splendid figure I shall make seated on the throne!" And he thought day and night about it. And he wished this evil wish. And to those who would listen to him, he talked about it. Although he never prayed to God, he began to pray to the people. As they came in by the gates of the city, he said, "Dear people, make me your king."

Some of the people were foolish and wicked, and listened to his prayer. And they joined together to drive the old King David away from the kingdom, and put beautiful young Absalom on the throne. And Absalom and his people got swords and spears, and began to fight. They got together a great army to drive out David. And David was driven from his home and from Jerusalem, and had to flee beyond Jordan.

But when this had gone on for a short while, some of the people who still loved David, and thought that right things should go before pleasant things, came together with swords and spears also, to fight against the army of Absalom. And there was a great battle in the forest of Ephraim. Absalom was there amongst his fighting men on the battle-field. But as he rode about on his royal mule he was separated from his own soldiers, and met those of his father. And he was afraid, and turned and fled back into the wood to hide himself until they passed. But as he rode, his beautiful hair was caught in one of the branches of a tree. And his affrighted mule rode on from under him. And he was left hanging between the branches and the ground. The hair he was so proud of held him fast, till his father's soldiers

closed round about him, and put him to death. Then they threw him into a ditch and covered him with stones.

That was the end of Absalom. He put the pleasant thing first, and the right thing last. And he lost all—everything he had liked and worshipped, and sought after—his beautiful hair, the face he had so often looked at in the mirror, his place among the princes of Israel, his honour and character as a son, and at last life itself.

III.

This has always been God's way. In all ages and to all sorts of men, those who have put the right things first have been blessed by Him: those who have put the pleasant things first have been troubled.

The prophet Daniel was a man who put the right things first. He loved God. He loved praying to God. Three times a day, with his windows open towards Jerusalem, where God's temple was, he cried to God in prayer. But the wicked men of Babylon hated this praying to God. And they hated Daniel because he prayed to God. So they got the king to say, that for thirty days everybody was to pray to him, and to him only, and every one

who prayed to God, as Daniel did, should be cas into a den of lions. What Daniel had to choose between, therefore, was this right thing—praying to God—and this pleasant thing—saving himself from being cast into the den of lions.

I am sure life was as sweet to Daniel as it is to you and me. It could never be a pleasant thing to be cast into a den of lions. And he might have said, "'Tis only for thirty days." But then, there was nothing wrong in being cast among the lions. And it would have been quite wrong, even for thirty days, to have stopped praying to God, or to have prayed to the king instead of God. The right thing to do was to keep on praying to God; the pleasant thing, to keep from being thrown to the lions. But when the two came together, and he had to put one of the two first, he put the right thing first. He kept on praying to God.

Now it was not Daniel only who had to make this choice. The bad men who got the king to pass the wicked law, they also had a choice to make. It was a pleasant thing for them to get Daniel thrown to the lions. It is always pleasant for bad men to get good men out of their way. But although it was pleasant, it was wrong. And

it was very wrong. The right thing was to have left Daniel free to pray to his God. The right thing would have been to have said, "O king, do not pass such a cruel law as that." But they put the pleasant thing, which was also a cruel, wicked thing, first. And from the right thing they hid their eyes entirely.

See now how differently God dealt with Daniel and with them.

Daniel had put the right thing first. He had said, "I dare not stop praying to God." And God did not forsake him when he was cast into the lions' den. All that night, all through the black hours, beside those hungry lions, face to face with their sleepless eyes, God, unseen, stood by His servant and shut their mouths.

But when the men who had put, not the right thing, not God's honour and law, first, but their own wicked and cruel pleasure, when they came next day and were thrown, because of their wickedness, in Daniel's stead, among the lions, God let the fierce beasts open their mouths to destroy them. In a moment the "lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den."

IV.

This is still God's way; His law never changes. Although twenty-four hundred years have passed since He saved Daniel, He still puts a blessing on all who like Daniel put the right thing first. And He refuses to bless those who put the pleasant thing first.

About thirty years ago there was a famous master at one of our universities who used to give a gold medal every year to the student who wrote the best essay on "Truth." And year by year the name of the student who gained the medal was set up in letters of gold on the walls of that master's class-room. One year there came up from the country a young lad who wanted greatly to have his name on these walls in letters of gold. And he set his heart on winning the gold medal for the essay on "Truth." As he was pacing to and fro in the corridors of the university one day, thinking what fine things he could put into his essay, the author of an essay which gained the medal some previous year went past. And in a moment it flashed into the young student's mind, that if he could get this essay to read, he might find out from it what sort of essay was likely to win the prize. So he went to the author and borrowed

the essay which had won the prize. But when he read the essay he saw that it was far beyond anything he could think or write. And the evil thought came into his soul to copy it from beginning to end, and send it in as his own. It would be so pleasant to get the prize. It would be so pleasant to have his name printed up on the walls in letters of gold. It would be so pleasant when he went back to the country to have the neighbours and his old schoolfellows saying, "That is the man who got the medal of gold for the essay on 'Truth.'" And he did that very thing. He put all thought of what was right out of his soul. He thought only of what was pleasant. He bent the whole force of his mind to seek his own pleasure. He neither sought righteousness, nor fairness to others, nor truth, nor honesty, nor God. He sat down and copied out the whole of the borrowed essay, word by word, and put his own name on the back of it, and sent it in to the master as his own.

The master read the essay, and said, "This is the best essay of the year; it deserves the prize." But, although he said that, some words in the essay kept coming back to him, as if he had somewhere or other seen them before. And by-and-

by, the whole essay came back to his memory, and he found out that it was the essay which had won the medal two years before.

The Bible says, "Shame is the promotion of fools." Instead of glory, this foolish lad was to have shame. The master brought the essay to his class next morning, and told the whole sad, shameful story, and ended by expelling the foolish writer of it from his class. He had put the pleasant thing first, the right thing last. He wanted honour and a gold medal, and his name printed in letters of gold; but what he got was disgrace, and an evil name that followed him all his days.

V.

I have just one thing more to say to you. We have all got to put the right thing first, even when no good can come to us in this world. God will still bless us for doing it; but the blessing may not appear till we are in His presence in heaven.

One of our English poets has a beautiful ballad, in which he tells the story of a little nurse who acted in this heroic way. On the 31st of May, 1868, at Newcastle, this girl, Margaret Wilson, was playing beside the railway, not far from the station, with three younger children who were in her care.

While they were in the midst of their play an engine and its tender came gliding up.

> "The dreadful weight of iron wheels
> Among them in a moment steals,
> And death is rolling at their heels!"

Maggie, seeing the danger, ran at once with a little boy to the platform. But when she looked behind for her other two babes, she saw them in the very pathway of the engine. In a moment, without thought of her own safety, she ran back. She had just time to snatch them out of the advancing wheels. And then, as with the quick thought of a little mother, she planted them in the one possible spot of safety there,—close up against the sunk breast of the platform, between the platform and the rails. She put the children inside. And she covered them with her own body,—standing like a wall between them and death. They were saved. She was killed. The pleasant thing for Margaret Wilson would have been to have got on the platform herself. The right thing was to save the children who had been put in her care. She put right thing first. She was killed. But it was a Christ-like deed she did that day. Although it was done by a little nurse girl, an angel could not have done it better. She saved the children whom it

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was her duty to save: that was her glory. In doing that, she had to die. But she died putting the right thing first. No wonder the poet, who has lifted her story into song, ends his ballad with this burst of praise:

"My little heroine! Though I ne'er
Can look upon thy features fair,
Nor kiss the lips that mangled were;

"Yet thy true heart, and loving faith,
And agony of martyr death
God saw—and He remembereth." *

* F. T. Palgrave.

ON GIVING PLEASURE TO GOD.

ON GIVING PLEASURE TO GOD.

AT the beginning of a new year it is good to ask, whether there is any thought we can receive into our hearts which will help us to lead better lives than we lived before.

There is one thought which very few have opened their hearts to, which yet is one of the best thoughts we can think. It is the thought that we have been made, and are kept in life, that we should give pleasure to God.

It will make a great difference in our lives when, instead of doing things to please ourselves, or our companions, we do everything to please God.

I once read a poem, by Mary Howitt, in which this good thought is put into the lips of a very little child. He was called Willie. One day Willie's mamma saw him sitting very silent in the sunlight, with all the men and women and the

beasts and birds of his Noah's ark set out in a row. "What are you thinking about, Willie?" said his mamma. Willie answering, said:

"You know that God loves little children,
And likes them to love Him the same;
So I've set out my Noah's Ark creatures,
The great savage beasts and the tame,—
I've set them all out in the sunshine,
Where I think they are plainest to see,
Because I would give Him some pleasure
Who gives so much pleasure to me."

It is true that it is only a very little child who would think of giving God pleasure in that way. But although the way of doing the good thing is a little child's way, the thing itself is good to do.

It is good for everybody to try to give God pleasure.

There was a great prophet in the world once, in the days before the ark, who tried to do this, and who did it all the days of his life. It was the prophet Enoch. At the end of his life, the story of his life told by God Himself was this: "He pleased God." Not himself, not his friends, but God. I have tried to see what it was in his life that gave pleasure to God, and I find it was this, that "He walked with God." Now you know why

it is you walk with some young people and not with others. It is because you know them and love them, and know that they love you. Enoch knew all that about God. He knew that God loved him and he loved to be in God's company, and to have God near to him in everything he did. "He walked with God:" in the very way God walked—the way of truth and right. "He walked with God:" he had God for his friend, and told Him by prayer all that was in his heart. "He walked with God:" he went about with God doing good, helping the helpless and trying to bring people to God. Every day he would say to himself, "How can I please God to-day?" And day by day, he kept doing the will of God, and walking out and in with God for his friend.

But there was a greater than Enoch who pleased God. You remember this is the very thing which the voice from heaven said of Jesus: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And God was well pleased with Jesus. He began to be pleased with Him even when He was a child. It is said that Jesus, when He was a little boy at Nazareth, "grew in favour both with God and man." Could anything better ever be said of a child's life? To be in favour with God! To

have God well pleased with you! That is to be like Jesus Himself. And you may really be like Jesus in this very thing if you do as He did. He set Himself so to give pleasure to God that it became His meat and His drink to do God's will.

A little girl came one day to the late Charles Kingsley, and said: "Dear Mr. Kingsley give me a song." And Mr. Kingsley, who had a great love for children, wrote this song for her:—

"Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long;
And so make life, death, and that vast forever,
One grand, sweet song."

It is a great pleasure to God when His children do noble things. But I wonder if the little girl for whom this song was written, knew—I wonder if you know—what the noblest thing ever done on this earth was! It was dying on a cross. It was Jesus laying down His life to save the world. Nothing else gave such pleasure to God as this. Jesus died to let God's love be known. He died that this love might shine in upon sad hearts and sorrow-filled homes; and that the poor, and the heavy laden, and those who are out of the right way, like the prodigal in the parable, might be drawn by it to God.

To help children to be like Jesus in this, some things are mentioned in the Bible which give pleasure to God. It is a great pleasure to Him to see His children sharing the good things He has given them,—food, or clothes, or knowledge, or happiness,—with those who have none. That was the kind of sacrifice which Jesus made. He gave up the life which His Father had given Him, that all the world might share it. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. It is a great pleasure to God, also, when children honour and obey their parents. Jesus did that. One of His last thoughts on the cross was to make provision for the honour and welfare of His mother Mary when He was gone. But the greatest thing of all in giving pleasure to God is love. It is impossible to please Him unless there be some knowledge of His love in our hearts, and some love to Him in return. The heart of Jesus was filled with both that knowledge and this love. And all who wish to please God as Jesus did, and know these ways of doing it, will earnestly try to follow them.

But this leads me to tell you what is the first way of coming into this life of giving pleasure to God. It is a way so simple that a very little child can understand it. It is just letting God

please you. Yes, that was the secret of the life which the Lord Jesus lived. He began by letting His Father in heaven please Him. The desire of God is to give pleasure to His children. There is a psalm which speaks of God's ways with His children, where it is said: "Thou shalt make them drink out of the river of Thy pleasures." And God sets Himself to give us this very pleasure. He gives us the very things to be pleased with which please Himself:—the river of His own pleasures. This is the river of which it is said in another psalm "it maketh glad the city of God." And this river which maketh glad the city of God, and is the river of God's own pleasures,—is nothing other than the love which is in Jesus Christ, which brought Him to die for us, and with which God is ever well pleased. This is the way in which God works when He is working in us to bring us to will and to do His good pleasure. He begins by getting us to be pleased with the Son in whom He Himself is pleased. It is the same as if He said, "See, this is He on whom My love is ever resting, in whom I have endless joy. Take pleasure in Him." And whoever is brought by God's great kindness, to be pleased with Jesus and with the things in Him with which God is pleased—and

these things are love and mercy and truth—begins in that very pleasure to give pleasure to God.

To be pleased with Jesus is a child's first step in the life of giving pleasure to God.

Now I give you this good thought. I ask you to admit it into your hearts. I advise you to take it for the rule of your lives. Say in your own heart to God, "O my Father, from this time forth I will try to give pleasure to Thee."

In the fairy stories, the young prince or princess who is setting out in the world always meets a kind fairy who gives a cap, or a ring, or a flower, or a ball, which must never be let go or lost, and it will be help by the way. But this which I am offering you is a better gift than any fairy could give. This will be better than wishing-cap, or ring, better than gold or silver. The child who shall say, "I will from this day live to please God," will live a happy, good life. And at the end, God will tell the same thing about the life of that child as He told about Enoch's and Christ's. He will say, "I have been well pleased with this child.

NICOLAS HERMAN.

NICOLAS HERMAN.

I.

ABOUT two hundred years ago there was living in the city of Paris an old man who was so holy, and in his holiness so happy, that people came to him from far and near to learn the secret of his life.

He lived in a great house with a company of religious men. Among those men his place was a very lowly one. He was their cook, and it was down in the kitchen of their great house that he had to spend his days.

For more than forty years this man lived in that house doing this lowly service. And through all those years, the one desire and joy of his heart was to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which might be displeasing to Him.

His name in his youth was Nicolas Herman, but in his old age, Brother Lawrence. He was born in Lorraine near the beginning of the seventeenth century. His parents were too poor to give him much schooling, and although, in some way or other, he learned to read, and in his old age could write a sensible letter, he remained through life without the learning which you to whom I am speaking receive at school.

As a boy he was very uncouth and very stupid. He was always doing awkward things. Nobody who saw him then could have foretold that he would one day cease to be awkward and become careful and wise and helpful. It is only God who can tell from the outside of a boy what sort of man he will become.

But although Nicolas was poor and unlearned, and in all his movements ungainly and awkward, he had, even as a boy, a gentle heart. And one day this gentleness showed itself in a very wonderful way. It was a day in winter. Everything was cold and bleak and bare. On this particular day Nicolas walking about, happened to come upon a tree that was leafless. Something drew him to look at the tree, and as he stood before it, looking, the thought came into his mind that that

very tree, bare and dead though it seemed at the time, would soon be all covered with leaves, with bloom, and by-and-by with fruit. And there came to him, in the very heart of this thought, the thought of God. He seemed to see at a glance that before all these changes could take place, God must be present to work them. Only God, working on the very spot, could bring back life to the dead tree. His soul at that moment caught sight of the great truth that God is everywhere present. He said to himself, "He is here, on this very spot." He learned that day, that God was not a God far off, but near. He was so near that He would be present to cover that tree once more with leaves. Standing before that tree, he saw that he was standing in the very presence of God. This nearness and presence of God became one of the thoughts of his soul.

In a dim way at first, no doubt, but more and more clearly as years went on, he saw God everywhere. From that day onward he lived as one who had been admitted, for one happy moment at least, into the presence of God. And I like to think, that as he turned his steps homeward that day, the poor, untaught, and awkward boy, whom everybody was already trying to scold into

less stupid ways, may have carried this new thought like a new joy in his heart, and said to himself, "Poor and stupid though I be, God is near me; and lowly though my father's cot is, God is there."

This was the beginning of religion in his life, but not yet of happiness. Nicolas had a long way to go and many things to learn and suffer before the happy years of his life began. A blessed thought had been dropped by the Holy Spirit into his soul. But it was as yet like a tiny seed which has neither root nor stem. The happiness which is in a holy life does not spring up in a day. Sometimes it takes years to grow, and often it has to be watered by our tears. At any rate, that was the case with Nicolas Herman. He was like the man spoken of in one of the psalms, who went forth weeping bearing precious seed. But it was to be a long time before he came back rejoicing with the fruit.

He was only eighteen years of age when he saw the vision of God's presence in the tree. After that, he had to become a soldier; and when he was set free from being a soldier, he became a footman in a private family. He was still unhandy in his ways. His master said of

him that he was a great clumsy fellow, who broke everything he was set to carry.

II.

But this was only the outside of his life. All this awkwardness and stupidity, this want of handiness in doing things, was a sincere grief to Nicolas. He did earnestly wish to have his faults corrected. He was willing to submit to any suffering by which his awkwardness should be put away. And now, being a man, and being very earnest about leading a right life, he began to look about for the best means of having his faults corrected, and he resolved at last that he should apply for admission to the house of the Barefooted Carmelites. There, he thought, I shall be taken to task, and if I fail to do well I shall be punished. And I am content to be punished until my faults are removed. The brethren consented to receive him into their kitchen and give him work as cook.

Now it was a custom with those brethren, before receiving any new member into their company, to put him upon trial for a time; and during that time the person wishing to become a brother was put under instruction for his soul. This was a very precious time for Nicolas. He got time to

think. But this at first brought him into new trouble. When he came to think about himself he found that much more needed to be put right in him besides his awkward ways. The thought that he was in God's presence led him to ask himself what sort of object he must appear in the eyes of the holy God. And then his heart sank within him. He saw that he was a poor sin-laden man, not worthy of a single glance from God. He recalled evil words he had spoken and evil deeds he had done, and thought that God, as the just Judge, could have no choice but to banish him for ever from His presence.

III.

But by-and-by—his history does not tell either in what manner or at what precise time—the Spirit of God directed him to look to the Cross and the blood of Jesus. He then saw that the holy God is a Saviour as much as a Judge, and that He is full of love; that He gave His son to die for sinners, and that there is cleansing for all sin in the blood which Jesus shed. Nicolas was slow to believe that there could be cleansing for him. For four long years he feared that he should be shut out from God's presence at last. And for six

years longer doubts of his salvation came back upon him from time to time. But all the while there was this fine resolution in his heart: whether he was to be saved, or shut out from salvation, he resolved to do the thing that was right. "Whatever becomes of me," he said, "whether I be lost or saved, I will continue to act purely for the love of God. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him."

But God did not leave him in this uncertainty. He came to his help, as He always does to those who are in earnest about their salvation. He brought him out of all his fears and into perfect happiness and peace, and He worked so great a change upon him also that all his awkwardness came to an end.

Although Nicolas never ceased to think meanly of himself, or to look upon himself otherwise than as a sinner, his whole view of God was changed. Instead of seeing Him as a judge about to punish a criminal at his feet, he saw Him as a gracious King who had come down from His throne to serve him. "This King," he said, "full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table,

serves me with His own hands, and gives me the key of His treasures."

IV.

After that, the principal thing in Herman which helped him to live a happy life, was the lesson he learned in his boyhood, when he stood before the leafless tree. A thought entered his soul that day which never left him. It was the thought that God is everywhere present. It was, as I said before, a very tiny thought for him at the first, a mere little seed of thought. But when the Holy Spirit took him in after-years and set him before the tree on which the Lord Jesus died, the thought grew and spread and filled his whole soul. He saw then that if God must be present to cover a dead tree with leaves and fruit, He must much more be present when a dead soul, like his own, was to be changed into a living one. A strong feeling took possession of him that he was always in the presence of God, and a feeling not less strong that it was his duty continually to remember that fact. And to this duty he set himself. Day by day, and every hour of the day, he said to his soul: "Soul, thou art in the presence of God thy King." At the beginning of his religious life, he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in

forming the habit of remembering this presence. He strengthened the habit by thinking often of God's goodness and mercy and nearness. If business took his soul away from the thought for a little, he sought a fresh remembrance of it from God. At length it came to be natural to him to feel that he was every moment in the Divine presence. He was so much under this feeling, that his prayers were like conversations with one who was in the same room with him; and sometimes like a joyful sense of that presence, as if his soul were telling its wants by simply looking into the face of God. At such times he was insensible to everything but the love of God. His highest joy was to feel himself in the presence of that love. It was a joy so sweet, that he likened it to the joy of an infant at its mother's breast. Indeed, he seemed to himself sometimes to be just an infant drinking happiness out of the bosom of God, so inexpressible was the sweetness he tasted in the presence of his Lord.

V.

Another thing in Nicolas which made his life a happy one was his putting God's will always before his own.

He had set his heart on being like the Friend in

whose presence he so much loved to be. And he had learned that the nearest and best way to this likeness was to let this Divine Friend rule him in everything. So he placed himself altogether under the will of God. He gave up everything to God, that God might be everything in his life. He gave himself. He gave body and soul. He gave will and wish. He kept nothing back.

It was not easy to do this at first. But he prayed for help. And all difficulty came to an end. And it became both easy and pleasant, until at last, next to the joy of being in the presence of his Divine Friend, was the joy of giving up everything for that Friend's sake.

His life, after that, was a life of obedience to God. At every step in life, and in all things—in things small as well as great—in things painful as well as pleasant, he said to God, "Thy will, and not mine, be done." He liked to remember how much God had given up for him. He liked to fill his soul with the thought that Jesus gave His life to redeem him. And he looked upon himself, in consequence, as one that belonged to God. "I am not my own, but God's," he said. "And I will think no thought, I will speak no word, I will do no act except as God allows me."

And this was his life. His soul's ear was bent to listen for the commands of God. His greatest joy was in fulfilling these commands. He would do no action and suffer no thought which he knew to be contrary to them. His whole endeavour was to let God work His will in him. He felt himself so entirely in the hands of God, to do, or to suffer, as it might please Him, that he sometimes likened himself to a block of stone which a sculptor was carving into a statue. God who loved him was this sculptor. And Nicolas would present himself as such a stone before God, and say, "O my Best Friend, my Maker, my Lord, shape me into Thine own image : make me entirely like Thyself."

VI.

A great secret in the happiness of Nicolas was the close connection he kept up between his religion and his daily tasks.

He took his religion with him into the kitchen. He could not bear the error of some, that religion was only for the church, and for religious meetings Religion and business with Nicolas were not two things, but one. He did all the work of a cook as the servant of God and out of love to God. And in the very humblest part of his duties he tried to

give pleasure to God. Like the Apostle, who said, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," Nicolas felt that whether he was cooking in the kitchen, or worshipping in a church, he had all the same to glorify God.

To this old man the kitchen was as holy a place as a church. He was with God there! Daily he had sweet talk with Him as he went about his humble duties. And the fireside, with its pots and pans, and with its heats and smells, became like a gate of heaven unto his soul.

And this was the more beautiful in him because naturally he did not like the work of the kitchen. But he put his dislike of the work aside and did it joyfully out of love to God. He began every part of his duties with silent prayer. As the work went forward, he would lift up his heart again in prayer. And when it was finished, he would give thanks to God for helping him. Or, if he had failed, he would ask God to pardon him. In this way his distasteful work became a joy to him, and easy. And it was so mixed up with prayer that his soul was more united to God amid the tasks of the kitchen than when he was in his private room.

Nicolas believed that a holy life did not depend

upon finding some high and heavenly kind of work to do; but in doing common work, the work of every day, for the love of God. It is a holy life, he held, to do for God's sake the things we commonly do for our own. He put great stress on the doing of little things to God. He used often to say, that Christians ought never to weary in doing little services for His sake. "It is not the greatness of the work which God regards," he would say, "it is the love with which it is performed."

A friend who saw him at his work in the kitchen has borne witness how truly it was work for God. "His very countenance was edifying. There was such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not fail to affect the beholders. In the greatest hurry he still preserved his heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit."

Nicolas himself said, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

VII.

There were many other things in this life which helped to make it a happy one, which I should be glad to tell about, but I must content myself with one more.

Nicolas had such perfect faith in God that when he brought any difficulty before Him in prayer, when he came with some burden, or sorrow, or care, he really left it with God. After laying it on God, he did not suffer it to trouble him more. And it was the same with his sins. When he had once asked God to forgive him for some particular sin, he left the sin with God, and believed that he was forgiven, and went on to do the next duty on his path. In this way, he had an almost unbroken peace and joy of mind.

To people who came to ask him about the way of happiness, he was accustomed to say: "Keep the thought of the Presence of God ever in your hearts; and give yourselves entirely to the study of His love, and you will come to perfect happiness. The more you know of His love, the more you will wish to know; and the greater your knowledge is, so much deeper will be your love, and so much greater your desire to be continually in His company. Cast everything out of your hearts, that

God may have the whole room to Himself. And when God has taken up His abode there, trust Him in everything to the end of your lives."

Writing some advices of this sort when he was about eighty years of age, he added, "I hope from God's mercy the favour to see Him in a few days." And within a few days he went home to be with God for ever.

GOD'S THOUGHTS ABOUT LITTLE PEOPLE.

GOD'S THOUGHTS ABOUT LITTLE PEOPLE.

I.

THE story of Naaman the Syrian is one of many stories in the Bible which show us the thoughts of God about little people.

Perhaps everybody in Syria, certainly everybody in Naaman's house, thought Naaman's wife, or Naaman himself, the greatest person of the house. But in the sight of God, the greatest person was the little captive out of the land of Israel, the little maid who waited on Naaman's wife.

God needed some one to remember Him in Syria, and to speak for Him in Naaman's house. Naaman could not do it. He did not know God. He knew the King of Syria and the king's captains, and the king's fighting men; and he knew all about swords and shields, and bows and arrows, and battles. But he knew nothing about

God. No more did the great lady who was his wife. He and she were mighty people in the land, but they were poor heathens all the same, and did not know God. But the little maid who served in their house knew Him. She knew more than the mighty man her master did, more than the lady she waited on did. She knew God. She was only a little girl, a mere servant, and a slave besides—one of the poorest saddest kinds of servants—but it was she and not any of the great people—she and no one else in all that Syrian land—whom God chose to remember Him. Of this poor, humble slave girl He said: "This child shall be My greatest here. She shall speak for Me in this heathen land, and tell of My power and My love."

II.

The next thing this story shows is, that it was not because this poor girl was little, or because she waited on Naaman's wife, or because she had been brought away captive out of the land of Israel, that God chose her to be His greatest servant in Syria and to speak for Him in Naaman's house. It was because she only in all that land knew God and was able to tell of His power and His love.

God does not choose people for His great places because of outside things, but only and always because there is knowledge of Him and love to Him in the heart. Big bulk or little bulk, riches or poverty, palace or hovel,—God passes these things and things like these by. He searches for knowledge of Himself, for love to Himself, and where He finds these, in high or low, in bond or free, He makes His choice. If He finds these in a hovel, and in the poorest form on earth, or in a child, even if that child should be a slave, and one who is counted nobody in the house she serves, He will not pass by, His choice will rest there. He will lift up that little child, that slave who is nobody in the house, and give her a place beside Himself, and say to her: "Thou shalt speak here for Me."

It was because this little captive out of the land of Israel knew God, and alone in all Syria knew Him, and because she loved Him and was good, for this reason, and for no other, God chose her to be a speaker for Him.

III.

The third thing this story helps us to understand is, that if the little captive out of the land of Israel knew God better and loved Him better than any-

body in Syria, it was because she had been taught to do that before.

Knowledge of God does not grow up in the heart, any more than knowledge of stars or trees or books. Just like other lessons, it has to be learned and got by heart. And once on a time, on her mother's knee, or at school, in happier days, this little captive had had to learn this lesson. And not once but many times she had to learn it, and to set her whole heart on learning it. And not once but many times she had to answer when her mother or her teacher tried her to see if she had learned aright. And being in those days a mere child, I dare say, sometimes, when she heard her companions shouting outside at their play, her eyes would fill with tears, and she would say to herself: "It is so tiresome to be learning lessons." But now her life is all changed. She looks back to those days as the happy days of her life. Now also she sees the good, which then she did not see. And now, with tears of a different kind in her eyes, she thinks thankfully of the dear father and mother who kept her at her lessons and taught her concerning God.

And, although this thought never came into her mind, although she never dreamed when she was

telling her mistress of Samaria and the prophet there that she was doing anything great or good, it was because, in the happy years of her life, she had been taught to know God and love Him, that God, in her sad years, put this crown on her life and made her a speaker for Him.

IV.

By this story we may learn next some of the reasons which God has for sending trouble to children.

Unless this little maid had suffered, she could not have been just where God wanted her to be, when she was needed to speak for Him. She suffered things the very hardest to bear which a child can suffer. Only a few years back—perhaps only a few months back—she was a happy little girl in one of the homes in Israel. The land of Syria, where she now was, joins on to the land where she was born. As she went out with her mistress along the Syrian roads she could see the hills of her native land. Yes! on those very hills, blue in the distance, lie the ruins of her once happy home. As she casts her eyes that way the vision of the cottage on the hill-side comes back into her heart, and the faces and forms of the dear

ones who loved her there. Father, mother, sisters, brothers, she sees them all again, she hears their voices, she joins with them in the morning and evening psalm. And then that vision passes, and another comes into its place, and it is night, and there is a sudden tumult on the hill. A storm of wild shouting rouses them all out of sleep. The door is burst open. Fierce soldiers burst in. She sees the blood on her father's face from his death wound. She sees her mother tied with ropes and led away to be sold; and all the children led out, and all separated; and she is an orphan and a slave; and life has changed for her and for them for evermore.

If, when all that horror fell into her young life, she thought of God and of the Divine love her father and mother trusted in, it must have seemed a great darkness to her. Could God love them and suffer such misery to fall upon them? And what could God's thoughts concerning herself be when He suffered her to be carried away captive out of the land of Israel?

If such thoughts came into her mind at the time of her suffering, the explanation of them comes now. Now she learned why she had to pass through so much. By the steps of sorrow and

bereavement she was led to Naaman's house, and to the daily spectacle of his leprosy, and into the confidence of the lady she served, and to a moment when she pitied her master with the pity of God that was in her heart, and to another moment when she told of the prophet who could heal her master, and last of all, to the happy day when she saw him returning from that prophet, after his flesh had come to him again "like unto the flesh of a little child."

And more than all that, although she herself could never know this, through the tribulations she suffered she passed up to a place among God's throned ones—among the saintly women and holy men who spake and acted for Him in the days of old. And although we do not know her name, God knows it, and the holy angels know it, and one day we too shall know it.

v.

Now, although I have tried to mix up the lessons with the story itself, there are three which I should like to put a special mark on, because they are lessons which it is good for children to get by heart.

The first is, that you should not despise servants. Perhaps God has sent one of His angels,

or helpers, in the form of a servant into your home, as He sent the little maid from Israel into Naaman's.

The next is, that you should not weary over the lessons you have to learn at school. You never can know till long after—and this little maid from Israel did not know till long after—the good which lessons—especially lessons about God—will bring to those who have learned them well.

And the last is, that you should not look upon sickness and bereavement as altogether evil. There is good in the heart of the evil. Often they are messengers sent from God to draw you nearer to His heart. It is a trial very hard to bear when God takes father or mother away. And the home is very dark when He takes both. But for children to whom this trial is sent, as for the child who had been carried away captive out of the land of Israel, God's purpose is love. By the very things they suffer they may be prepared, as this little captive was, to be helpers of others who suffer, and in the end to bring them, as she brought Naaman, to God.

THE PATIENCE OF MARGARET HOPE.

THE PATIENCE OF MARGARET HOPE.

WHEN cholera came the second time to this country, a poor young lass in a Scottish village was beginning to learn the greatness of God's love for His people. But there was one thing she saw caused her to fall into great trouble of soul. She saw that the terrible sickness made no difference between the good and the bad. It even sometimes passed the doors of people notorious for their evil lives and entered those of the best-living servants of God.

She would not have been surprised if any night the sickness had come to herself. She had not yet learned to think of herself as one whom Jesus loved. What troubled her was, that the sickness fell on homes which she had all her days looked upon as protected by His love.

Her trouble took its rise in the ninety-first

psalm, the psalm which the Tempter quoted when he wanted the Saviour to cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the Temple. In that psalm, when a little girl at school, she had learnt by heart these words :—

> "No plague shall near thy dwelling come,
> No ill shall thee befall;
> For thee to keep in all thy ways
> His angels charge He shall."

And through all the years which had gone over her since, she had believed that these words were a promise which the faithful Saviour would be sure to fulfil. Yet now a time had come to her native village in which fulfilment of this promise might be looked for; and there was no fulfilment of it.

She said to her soul: "Soul, has God forgotten His promise? Or, are those on whom the plague has fallen not His people? Or, are the words mere words and no promise? Or, is it I who am ignorant and have not yet learned what they mean?" And her soul replied: "Margaret, Margaret Hope, art thou not as yet a mere child in the Scriptures; and dost thou dare to ask of its words, if they are mere words and no promise?"

At that, a great silence fell upon Margaret's soul. And she took up her Bible and the psalm which had plunged her into trouble, and began to read, and think, and pray, and to sit like a child at the feet of God, until He should be pleased to give her the right understanding of the words.

For fourteen days, almost day and night, taking little sleep, eating little food, her soul sat in this silence, in this search for God's meaning, at the feet of God. Do not smile at her, you who have had parents or teachers to tell you the meaning as you read: you who see the meaning all clear. She had no parent, no teacher, no help from man. She was in darkness and had to work her own way through the darkness to the truth. But she bent herself with all her young strength and heart to find the truth. Verse by verse, word by word, poring over each, praying over each, she read. It seemed so plain, so clear: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling," that she was sometimes in despair of ever seeing anything else in the words. Then she would read the psalm from beginning to end: then she would compare it with other psalms and other passages of Scrip-

ture. And still no light came to her. There was the promise—clear as a sunbeam: "Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling;" and there, outside, at that very moment, was a real plague wrapping the dwellings of God's people round and round with the fog of death.

At length, however, light began to dawn upon her, but in a strange, unlooked-for way. An assurance fell upon her soul and spread gently over it, that although she might never come to see the real meaning, the words were God's; and, in His good time, if not here in this world, then in the next, He would make their meaning plain to her. And she was thanking God for this, and was about to close the Bible for the night and rest in what she had come to, when her eye caught the first words of the previous psalm—the ninetieth—and in a moment the whole rich meaning of the ninety-first flashed into her soul and through and through her like a sudden burst of morning light. "Lord, Thou hast been a dwelling-place in all generations." Thou! God Himself. This,—not the house in the city, or the village, but God Himself, — was the dwelling which no plague could enter, which no evil could touch. The great dark wall of her ignorance fell down. The

psalm which troubled her was a psalm which set forth God as the dwelling-place and habitation of His people. And the promise was to those who made Him their habitation. A great joy took hold of her, and a new deep trust in God. She was like one whom an angel has lifted nearer heaven. She felt that God was, indeed, a dwelling-place for His people ; and even, although at first in a timid way, that He would be a dwelling-place for her. Then, like a child to its mother, she went closer to God, taking refuge in His love and goodness, until at last she rose into all the joy of knowing and having God as the dwelling-place of her soul.

But when God sends a joy like this into any soul, it is always because it has some work to do. It is like the food He gave to Elijah under the juniper-tree, in the strength of which the prophet had to go forty days and forty nights. And so it turned out with Margaret Hope. The pestilence did not touch her. But when that was beginning to be forgotten, at the end of five years from the time of her soul's trouble, a great trial fell on her. A disease almost worse than the pestilence laid hold of her face. And, first, one little bit of her face and then another was eaten away, until at last

the whole centre of her face was gone. Margaret could no longer go out of doors—except at night. The doctors hung a patch of green silk over her face, but it was so painful to look upon, that she had no choice but to shut herself up in her room. And she became a prisoner. Except far away over the roofs of the houses she never saw the green fields again, nor a flower, except when pitying friends brought her a posy from their gardens. Morning after morning she rose to her weary task of winding pirns for the weavers in the village. A little girl came daily to do her few messages, and that was her outer life. But it was not her real life. Her real life was hid with Christ in God. Her real home also was in God. She never went back from the joy which she had learned from the two psalms. Day by day she said to her soul: "Soul, thou art not in an attic as I am, nor do thine eyes look forth from over a face all wasted with disease. Thou dwellest in mansions on high, in God Himself, and thine eyes behold the King in His beauty." It was while Margaret was in the first stages of this trial that I first visited her. I found her studying her Bible. And very soon I found myself listening with all my soul to what she had found in her Bible. She had a wonderful

insight into the meaning of the Bible. And she had a still more wonderful belief in the reality of it. But her strongest, surest belief was this, that God was the habitation of His people, and that there no evil, nor plague, nor wasting of flesh, nor disfigurement of face could come.

Circumstances led me to remove from that village to a distant city. And ten years went past before I saw Margaret again. And by that time a still heavier affliction had come to her. She was blind. As I went up the wooden stairs that led to her attic, I saw her door open, and her own form standing in the light. "I knew it was you," she said, "I have not forgotten your step." I spoke of her blindness as a great calamity. But she said: "There's no blindness in the house my soul lives in. No,—no night there, you know." "But tell me, Margaret," I said, "tell me the very truth: is that word still a joy for you? Do you not feel your blindness to be an evil?"

She was knitting a worsted stocking as I spoke, and she stopped, laid her knitting things aside, and said: "If I were always right myself, that word would never fail me. I did think my blindness a great trial when it came. And in my grief there was, as it were, a veil over my soul. And

I did not see, and I did not feel that it was true in the way I used to feel, that no evil can come nigh the dwelling. But that was only for a little time. I came back to my faith in God. And He brought me back to my vision of love and goodness in Him."

As she was speaking a mavis began to sing on a tree outside. "Do you hear that?" she said eagerly. "That is a joy I never fully knew till I became blind. The mavis, and the blackbird, and the lark, and the red-breast, ay, and the very sparrows, have been sent into my darkness by God to cheer me. And in their different seasons they sing to me morning and evening, and all the day long. Oh, I have many joys. I think I see God better since I became blind. It is a dark world, no doubt, I live in; and to me who cannot go out at all now, it seems sometimes very dark. But dark though it be, I aye see a throne in the midst of it, and my Saviour sitting on it for me. And I hear the song of the four-and-twenty elders, and the four living ones and the angels saying: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.'"

I rose to leave, and as I did so I said: "Well, Margaret, one thing I see, that the good Lord is perfecting patience in you. And you are, no

doubt, learning obedience as the Lord did by the things you suffer."

"Do not say that, sir," was her reply. "My patience at its best is but impatience beside Christ's. And sometimes I am very impatient. My face and my eyes pain me, and I am often sick. And in these times I am a cross to everybody who comes near me. And at these times the light goes out of my soul, and the vision of my home in God becomes dim. And I say to myself, 'Oh, Margaret, Margaret, thou art fallen now from thy dwelling on high, and thy place of refuge is no longer the heart of God, and thou art back to thy miserable attic, and to thy blindness, and to thy face that cannot be seen.' But God is very kind to me. He ever comes near to me, and gives me grace to repent. And He hides me in His tabernacle as before, and says to me: 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty again.' And I am just waiting His time, when He shall lift me out of the attic to Himself, into His own presence, from which by temper, or sickness, or sin, I shall no more go out."

I was drawing my hand away to leave; but she grasped it tightly, and said: "Do not leave me. You have only been an hour. What is an hour

in ten years? And to one that nearly all these years has been blind?"

She held me for some time longer. And still she talked about the ways of God. Meantime a shower of rain began to fall, and we could hear its gentle pattering on the slates. Then she let me go. Then her voice grew very tender as if she were praying, and she said: "May the eternal God be thy refuge for ever. No evil shall befall thee there, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

I never saw her again. But to this day when I hear the rain pattering on the slates I seem to be back in her lonesome attic, and to feel the clasp of her feeble hand. And a voice rises within me like the voice of a soul in prayer, and I hear once more the words: "May the eternal God be thy refuge for ever. No evil shall befall thee there, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

"THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED."

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ONE day a mother and her son were travelling in an Eastern land. It is different there from what it is in England. In this country we have dew and rain and wells and rivers, and our rivers never run dry. But in the East the sun is sometimes so hot that it dries up the dew and the rain and wells and rivers. And the grass is burned up, and the leaves fall from the trees, and there is no water to drink, and people die of thirst.

It was Hagar and Ishmael her son, who were travelling in that hot land. They had been sent away from Abraham's tent. The water they brought with them in their skin bottle was all spent. The hot sun beat upon their heads. And poor Ishmael grew sick for want of water, and was

near to die. It was a wilderness into which they had come. There were neither roads, nor houses, nor inns in it. And they could find no wells with water in them, no cool rushing streams, no green pastures, no shady trees. There was only the hot earth, with the blistering rocks and the burned up grass beneath their feet, and, above their heads, the blazing sun.

When people are very sad they are often not sure about their way; tears blind the eyes. Hagar was very sad. She loved Abraham. He was the father of her boy. His tent had been her home for many years. It was the only home the boy ever knew. And now she was homeless. And her boy had no father to care for him. And he was about to die in the wilderness. What was she to do? She could not carry him, he was a big grown up lad. And she could not bear to be beside him when she was not able to give him help. Poor Hagar! She did the best she could. There was a little clump of brushwood near, and she laid him down there, in the shadow. She herself drew back a little, and burst into tears; she could not bear to lose her boy, or to see him die.

But just then, when things were at the worst,

she heard a voice. It was the voice of an angel. "What aileth thee, Hagar?" the voice said; "God hath heard the cry of thy child." And suddenly, it was as if scales fell from the poor mother's eyes, and she saw there, in that very place, the thing she most wished to see, a well with water in it. In a moment her heart was filled with gladness. Her tears dried up. And she made haste and brought of the water to her boy, and he drank and did not die. Now God did not make that well that day; the well was there, although Hagar did not see it at first. The well had been there perhaps from the beginning of the world. It was prepared by God, and prepared for Hagar and her boy. Just there, where it was wanted by these two, God had prepared it, preserved it from being filled up, kept water in it, all ready, for years and years, till the day when Ishmael should need to drink of it and live.

Two young students were sitting one winter evening beside a fire. They had had a long talk together, and mostly about God. One of the two had lost sight of God and could not find Him again. He had been telling his friend this very fact, and saying that he could find no sign of Him in the world, or in his own heart.

It was no joy to this young soul that he had lost sight of God. He was not one of the evil class who sit in the chair of the scorner. He was filled with the same kind of sorrow that one has who has lost a friend. He had willingly listened to all that his companion had to say to him. And then the talk between the two ceased, and they were sitting silent, looking into the fire.

"Oh, my friend," said the one who had lost sight of God, "sitting as we are doing now, I sometimes see faces of people I have known, in the fire. From my heart I wish I could see the face of God there."

The friend said: "And does not something like God's face really shine out from this fire? Would there have been any fire for us two this night if some loving One had not been thinking of us before we were born? Who made the coals which are burning there? Who stored them up in the earth for the children of men? Who gave the eyes to find it, and the hands to dig it out?"

His companion did not answer, and he went on. "I do not wonder that people used to believe that fire was stolen from heaven. It is just like a thing that came from heaven. It turns winter into

summer and night into day; it cheers us, warms us, brightens our home for us. It renders us a thousand services which it must have been intended to render, and which seem to compel one to think that it was prepared by God for our use."

I cannot tell what effect these words had on the young man who had lost sight of God. But the well which Hagar found prepared for her, and what this young student said to his sorrowful friend, have set me a-thinking of the things which God has prepared.

We are living in a world which is full of things prepared. A fire far bigger than the one those young men sat beside has been prepared and kept burning by God for a longer time than you or I could tell. The sun is a fire around which all living things are gathered. It is life, and heat, and health, and light, and joy, and movement to man and beast, to birds and trees. It sends its heat and power into all things, and makes all things fruitful, and active, and glad.

And not the sun only, but moon, and stars, and hills, and streams, and fruitful fields. An old English poet has said this in words which every child should have by heart:—

For us the winds do blow;
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow.
Nothing we see but means our good,
As our delight, or as our treasure.
The whole is, either our cupboard of food
Or cabinet of pleasure.

The stars have us to bed;
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws;
Music and light attend our head.
All things unto our flesh are kind.

And all things have been prepared for us by God. He has brought us into a heritage that is very fair, and He has filled it with things good for our use.

When the children of Israel came up out of the wilderness into the Land of Promise they found houses, and gardens, and walled cities, and vineyards, and olive yards, and ploughed fields, and rich pasture lands all prepared for them. It is God's way in dealing with His children. He prepares good things for them first, and then brings them in to love Him and serve Him in the enjoyment of these. "See," He said to the children of Israel afterwards, speaking by the mouth of Joshua: "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and olive yards which ye planted not do ye eat. Now,

therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth."

And it is just this way God has dealt with you to whom I am this day speaking. You came from God as babies into this Christian land. When you opened your eyes and began to look about you you found yourselves in homes prepared for you, with loving mothers and fathers waiting to take care of you. You found yourselves in a land of churches, and days of worship, and Bibles, and schools, and teachers. Around the fire on winter evenings you have listened to stories of patriots who fought and of martyrs who died, for their country and for truth; these very stories are part of what God has prepared for you in this happy land. Beside you, perhaps in the same street or village in which you live, are men and women who have given themselves to God, and who every day of their lives, quietly and unseen, are going about doing good: these also, to be a help and example to you, have been prepared for you by God. But, more wonderful and better than all, in this very land you can find God Himself. There is no spot in it from which the cry of a child's heart will not reach Him. And here, as in Judæa long ago, His Son is taking up children in His

arms to bless them, and is healing the sick and opening the eyes of the blind, and saying to the poor and the heavy laden: "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." And all this is part of the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

There is a hymn we sometimes sing, which begins with the words, "I'm but a stranger here." In that hymn it is said, "Earth is a desert drear." But the meaning is not that the beautiful earth itself which God has prepared for our dwelling-place is a desert. The meaning is that it looks like a desert to eyes that have lost sight of God. It is like a desert also to people like Hagar, who are in sorrow, whose eyes are blind with tears because those they love have died or, are about to die.

But for people in these circumstances, and for all to whom for any cause the beautiful earth looks like a desert, God has prepared a well more wonderful than that which Hagar saw. Jesus was speaking of this well when He said to the woman of Samaria, "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give shall never thirst." Jesus Himself —as the Word of God—is this well. He is the well in which the water of life springs up, the

well which the saints in heaven drink of, of which God Himself drinks. And it has been prepared for us by God, prepared in Jesus, into whom for us the living water has been poured. And Jesus, thinking of Himself as this well of heaven, calls upon all to come unto Him and drink.

I read once of a young German student who found out this well. He was like one in a wilderness where he could not find God. Like Ishmael, he was dying for thirst, but it was the sight of God for which he was thirsting. Day and night his cry was, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" He saw himself to be a poor sin-laden creature, who was shut out by his sins from the presence of God. Day and night he sought after God. He sought in the church and could not find Him there. He shut himself up in his room, and cried out in the darkness, and could not find Him there. He saw the faces of saints and holy prophets in the fire, but never the face of God. His soul was faint within him for want of God. But one day he went into the library of the college where he was studying, and there, on the shelves, all covered with dust, he found the very well for whose water his soul was thirsting; he found the

Bible. There it was, all ready for him, waiting for him, prepared by God hundreds of years before, put there, in that very spot, for him by God. And the young man opened it and read and found the story of Christ in it, and the way by which a soul must go to find God, and how in Jesus a well has been opened for all sin, and that whosoever drank of that well should be cleansed of sin, made holy. and live for ever. It was Martin Luther who found the Bible in this wonderful way, and also found, as we also shall do if we try, that it is a well in the desert, a well into which God has poured water of truth and life for the soul to drink of and to live.

One of the wonderful things which Luther read in the Bible was the story of an old prisoner in Rome. The old man was chained to a soldier, and thinking sad thoughts. It was the great Paul. For telling men that Jesus was a well of salvation he had been sent by wicked men to prison. And now his trial was coming on, and his judge was a very evil man, and Paul was thinking in his own heart that the judgment might go against him. It was something like this which was passing through his mind: "My enemies are cruel, my judge is bad, and I may be condemned to die." Then he

thought of the work which remained to be done. Then he wondered who should do his work if he were put to death. Then he looked into the lonesome grave and across into the world beyond, and there he saw, all prepared for him, the very sight his sad soul wished to see; he saw Jesus on the throne of God. It was like seeing a well in a desert; it was like drinking of living water when the soul is faint with thirst. "Jesus reigns," he said to himself. "The work will go on, though I should die; and if I die, I shall go to Him."

When you and I come to the end of our lives may we see the vision which Paul saw, and be able to say with him, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." And may we know that we are going home to our Father's house, and to places there prepared for us by Christ.

We shall never know the beauty of these places till then. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

CHRIST RESHAPING THE SOUL.

CHRIST RESHAPING THE SOUL.

IN the city of Florence, more than four hundred years ago, there happened to be a great block of marble. At that time the people of Florence loved to have marble figures of saints and angels in the streets and squares of their city. The rulers of the city, wishing in this to please the people, sent for a carver of marble and said to him, "Take this block of marble and carve it into a statue for our city." But the man to whom this was said was careless or unskilful. He spoiled the block. He cut into it here and there, but brought out no statue. And it was cast aside, and lay in one of the building-yards of the city, covered with sand and rubbish, until it was looked upon as a worthless thing.

When the marble had lain in that place nearly

forty years, a young man, who is now known as the great Michael Angelo, had occasion to be in the yard where it lay. And seeing the block buried in the rubbish, he said, "I wish the rulers of the city would give this to me to carve." "But it is spoiled for carving," said a friend. "Not so spoiled," answered Angelo, "that there is not an angel inside still." The rulers hearing of this, and looking upon the block as worthless in its present state, said, "The young carver might go to work upon it and let the angel out." So he cleared it from the rubbish, took his hammer and chisel, and began to carve. And bit by bit the misshapen block came into shape. And at last, when his carving was ended, there stood before the eyes of the citizens a splendid figure of David with his sling. And this the citizens set up with joy in their city, and it is one of the great sights of Florence to this day.

When I read this story the other day, in the Life of Michael Angelo, I said to myself, "It is like the history of man upon the earth. First there is the fair unspoiled marble of human life, the first life in the garden, as made by God; then there is the marred life, the life misshapen by sin; then the beautiful new form of life, the new shapely Chris-

tian life, wrought in us by Jesus Christ. It is also like the story of the Prodigal. First there is the fair boy, the innocent life, with the promise of all good in it, in the early home; then there is the spoiled boy, the boy who would be a lord to himself, who took his life into a far land, and marred and wasted it all by sin; and then there is the boy new made, forgiven, clothed, and in his right mind, received back into the home once more."

This led me to think of other lives I had known or read about,—lives that had been marred by sin and cast out as worthless, just as the block of marble had been. And then I went on to think of the merciful Saviour finding these lives in their lostness, and lifting them up out of the dust, and reshaping them, and making them beautiful with the beauty of His own life.

I.

The first I thought of was John Bunyan, who wrote "Pilgrim's Progress." There was never a young life more like a marred block than his when he was a boy. You have all read the "Pilgrim's Progress." You remember the story of Christian and his burden, the evil city from which he fled, and the wicket gate through which he escaped, and

the cross where his burden fell off, and the open grave into which it fell. You remember the strange things which happened to him after that, the strange places he saw, and the people he met by the way. And you cannot have forgotten the river he passed over at last, or the songs which were sung as he and Hopeful were led up to the gate of the Celestial City on the other side.

Could you imagine that the man who wrote that wonderful story had once been a rude, godless, and wicked boy? Yet that is his own account of his early life. Bad companions, and ignorance, and his own foolish heart led him into evil of every kind. "It was my delight," he says, "to be taken captive by the devil at his will; being filled with all unrighteousness, so that from a child I had few equals, both for cursing, lying, and blaspheming the name of God."

John was a tinker, and the son of a tinker, in the town of Elstow. He had been taught to read, but forgot it. He was idle and given to play. When he grew up to be a lad, for a short time he had to become a soldier, and go into battle. But all through these years the Lord Jesus was watching over him, and preparing him to be one of His soldiers, and to write the "Pilgrim's Progress."

He sent strange thoughts and voices into the lad's heart. One Sunday afternoon as he was playing on Elstow Green at *Tip Cat* with other lads, he heard a voice saying to him, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" Although the voice was only in his own soul, it sounded so real that he looked up to heaven for the speaker. Like Nebuchadnezzar of old also the thoughts on his bed troubled him. He had dreams in which he saw wicked men shut up in globes of fire. His thoughts, when those dreams came, were like masterless hounds rushing up and down in his soul. Once, for a whole year, and after he had taken Christ for his Lord, he was tempted by a voice which told him to sell Christ as Esau had sold his birthright. The voice said, "Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him." Sometimes it would say it hundreds of times together, till he had to set his soul against it.

"One morning," he tells us, in the story of his life, "as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times, fiercely assaulted with this temptation,—the wicked suggestion running in my mind, 'Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him, sell Him,' as fast as a man could speak. I answered, 'No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands,' at least twenty times

together. But at last, after much striving, I felt this thought pass through my heart, *Let Him go if He will;* and I thought also that I felt my heart freely consent thereto."

John thought he was now fairly lost. "Down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt and fearful despair."

But John was not lost. Christ was bringing his misshapen life into His own form. In His kindness He gave him a godly wife, who taught him once more to read, and used to tell him how good it is to be good. Her father was good. John tried hard to be like her father. He went to church. He read the Bible. He followed the ten commandments. He prayed. Still he was not happy. But one day, he says, "The good providence of God called me to Bedford to work at my calling, and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, talking about the things of God." He drew near. He listened to their talk. It was about the new birth. He learned for the first time, like Nicodemus, that a man must be born again. He now saw that it was not the ten commandments, or going to church, that was to save him, but a new heart. And in good time, but not

without many temptations, such as the one to sell the Saviour, he received from that Saviour the new heart, and never more turned aside. And so it came to pass, that out of this poor, ignorant, idle gipsy lad, Christ formed a new, manly, beautiful life. Evil dreams of wicked men in globes of fire passed into the back region of his soul, and dreams of Christian pilgrims came into their place. He became a great preacher in this land. And although evil men put him into prison for preaching, he, even in the prison, dreamed his dream of heaven. He heard the bells of the celestial city ringing, and saw the forms of angels and just men made perfect going up and down on the golden streets. And in the solitude of his prison, with only his blind daughter to visit him, he wrote that story which old and young shall read as long as books are read in this world,—the story of Christian's pilgrimage from earth to heaven.

II.

It was a great blessing to John Bunyan that God gave him a wife who could pray. She prayed for him. It is the same blessing to you, when you have fathers and mothers who pray. They are always asking Jesus to give you His own beautiful form of

life. And if, at any time, in any of their children they see evil coming into the life, or the first fair form of baby life becoming spoiled by sin, it is to Jesus they go in their distress. They say to Him, "Lord Jesus, save our child; for Thy mercy sake, reshape the soul." But many a praying parent has to die before the prayers are answered, and the beauty of God can be seen on the children.

In a seaport town in Scotland, about twenty years ago, a Christian mother was dying, and some very earnest prayers which she had offered were unanswered still. Her husband, her sister, and all her children except one, were in the room beside her. "Are you willing to go, darling?" the sister said, bending over and kissing her. "If it seems good to my Father, I am," she whispered. Then, after a little pause, she added, "And I have no fear and no care." But when she said "no care," the sister, with all who were in the room, thought of the absent one. And she said, "About Dan, dearest, have you no care for Dan?" The dying mother said, whispering her words out one by one, "My prayers for Dan are with God; He will answer them in His good time. Dan will yet become a child of God. Day and night for seven years I have prayed that this might come to pass."

These were her last words. In a little while she died.

Dan had been a great care to her. He had been idle and wilful, and many things besides that are bad. His boyhood was wasted with idleness. He passed through school without learning anything except to read and write. There was no fear of God in his heart. He hated goodness and work. Many a time his mother had taken him into her room, and pleaded with him to leave his idleness and folly; but she pleaded in vain. At last he went to sea, and at the time she died was sailing on the coast of China.

But his mother had not left her prayers with God in vain. About six months after he had heard of her death, he was one night keeping watch with another sailor on the look-out. The night was dark, a strong wind was blowing, and the ship in full sail running before the wind. As he was pacing backwards and forwards on the poop, the one sailor on the one side, he on the other, the ship gave a sudden lurch, and he was thrown overboard. In a moment he felt himself falling through the darkness into the deeper darkness of the sea. He heard, or fancied he heard, the words, "Man overboard," sounded out by his companion. But next moment

he felt himself in the black waters, and sinking, sinking, sinking into their depths. He knew he had almost no chance of being saved. The ship was rushing forward at great speed, and must already be far from where he sank; and the night was very dark. But soon he ceased to think about safety or ship. His whole by-past life seemed to open up before him. He saw the school in which he was so idle, and the church which was such a weariness to him, and the house he had loved so ill, and the room in that home in which his mother had so often prayed and pleaded with him to change his life. The years of his boyhood came back to him one by one; and days in which he had played truant, and the faces of companions with whom he had wrought mischief. Then he recalled the time when he first went to sea, and his mother's tears as she parted with him. And then a vision of his mother on her death-bed, as she had been described to him in letters from home, came vividly into his soul. He seemed to be in the very room, and to hear the words which she had spoken, and her last words about himself. Then there was a great light, and in the centre of it he saw his mother's face; then, as he looked at her, expecting her to smile on him, the face changed and disappeared,

and there was a sound of bells ; then a murmur as of bees ; then the light faded, and a great silence fell upon his soul.

When he came to himself again, he was lying in his berth. Dark though the night was, and far behind though the ship had left him, his brave shipmates searched back for him with the long-boat until they found him,—and found him as he rose, perhaps for the last time, to the surface. It was a long week before he was able to leave the berth. But he left it a new man. In that week God gave him a new heart, and changed him in some measure into His own likeness. His mother's prayers were answered, as she foretold. Her idle, wilful boy became an earnest Christian man, and for many years did noble Christian service as captain of a vessel.

III.

I may be speaking to some boy or girl who is passing an unchristian childhood, and whose heart is beginning to see the evil of it, and to wish that Christ would put that evil away. For that child's sake I will tell a little history of a childhood which a Christian lady once told to me. The lady and I were speaking of children, and she said, "God does not despair of any child. God can turn boys

and girls who are rude, and selfish, and untruthful, into right-hearted children of His own. I am far from being what I ought to be. I am still a very imperfect, very frail servant of the Lord. But my childhood, when I look back to it, was as far from right as any child's could well be. I had no thought but for myself. I have never since met a child so selfish as I then was. My brothers and sisters, my father and mother—I cared for none of them in comparison with myself. I coveted and seized the best things. I took the best places for myself. When the younger children came in cold and weary, I would not leave the warm corner at the fire to help them, or give them the corner to sit in. When anybody in the house was sick, it was a worry to me to be asked to wait in the sick-room, even for half an hour. And when I was found out in any of my selfish and unkind ways, if I could defend myself by a lie, I told that lie. One day, there had been some worse outburst of my selfishness and untruthfulness than usual, and my father was present. 'Child, child,' he said to me in bitterness, 'I have never had one hour's pleasure in you.' It was a terrible word to come from a father's lips. I was fourteen at the time, and old enough to know the meaning and feel the pain of

the word. It went into my soul like a knife. I crept out of sight, went up to my little room, threw myself on the floor, and tried to cry. But no tears came to my eyes. I only felt the sharp words cutting me through and through, 'Child, child, I have never had one hour's pleasure in you.'

"I tried to think my father wrong, tried to think him mistaken, or unjust, or hard. But the more I thought of his words, the more clearly I saw them to be true. Then my thoughts went up to the Father in heaven. Had he also never had an hour's pleasure in me? I became afraid. I thought I was in His presence. And a face that at a distance was in some things like my father's, in some other things like pictures of angels I had seen, seemed to look at me, and look down into my very soul, with severe eyes, while from the lips came the words, 'Never one hour's pleasure in you.'

"I do not know how I got into bed that night and I have no remembrance of what took place for the next day or two. I could never afterwards feel that my father loved me. And he died without taking back his words or showing me any love. But I thank him for his words. They were God's sharp tools to new-shape me. My life began to

change from the hour they were spoken. With my whole strength I cried to God to help me to cast my selfishness away. And God has been very kind. As I said, I am still far from being what I ought to be; but He sends hours to me at times in which I am free to think, that even He is well pleased with me now, for Jesus' sake."

IV.

I will only say one thing more. God is very good, and both able and willing to reshape lives which have been spoiled by sin; but do not think it is all the same in the end for the lives He reshapes, as if they had never been spoiled by sin.

I knew a man once whom God had new-made—a most worthy, kind-hearted, God-fearing man. What God had changed him from was hard-heartedness. He had hard thoughts about God and man. He was hard in all his ways. He believed that everybody was dishonest, and had to be watched. He used to say, "God is no more to be trusted than other people." Although he came to the church on Sunday, he listened with hard thoughts to everything that was said. He was always finding fault, always saying to some one or other some bitter unkind word.

By the merciful providence of God this hard-hearted man fell ill, and for a time it seemed as if his illness might end in death. The servants whose honesty he never believed in were very kind to him in this illness. Neighbours whom he had spoken unkind words of came in and helped. The pastor whom he had often sneered at, and his fellow-members in the church he attended, came about him in loving and tender ways. And this love touched his hard heart. Through this love came upon him, for the first time, a belief in the love of God. On his sick-bed he learned that God may be trusted. He learned how great and true the love must have been which sent Jesus to die for us. God's love shining from the cross of Jesus was like coals of fire upon his heart. Its hardness was melted away, and a gentle, loving, trustful spirit was given to him, and he rose from his bed a new man, humble, meek, merciful, and full of charitable thoughts and deeds. But when this took place he was nearly an old man. The years which went before were lost years to him. So long as they lasted, the evil thoughts of his heart shut him out from being a friend either to God or man.

And therefore it is unwise and wrong for any one

to say, "I will go on in evil a while longer, and God will make me all right in the end." It is certain, that the longer one remains in such a way, the hurt of it will go deeper and deeper into the soul. Sin is always evil, and it always leaves evil marks behind.

The statue of David which Michael Angelo carved is not so beautiful as it would have been if the block from which he carved it had not been spoiled before.

ON THE EVIL OF FORGETTING GOD.

ON THE EVIL OF FORGETTING GOD.

I.

IN the Bible the most beautiful things are taken to describe the good that comes into a life that remembers God. But to describe the evil that comes upon a life that forgets God, things the most terrible are used. Among these terrible things is a tempest. Our Lord, speaking of one who hears His sayings but forgets to do them, says: He is like a house on which "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." The old prophets also, telling of cities that had forgotten God, and of evil days coming on them in consequence of that, describe these days as days of wind and tempest which shall smite and overthrow the cities, and at last leave them mere heaps of ruin. And in the chapter of Ecclesiastes,

where young people are exhorted to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, the Preacher speaks of evil days sure to come if they fail to remember Him, days in which they shall say "we have no pleasure in them." These days so evil that the soul can find no pleasure in them are likened to days in which the heavens are filled with tempest, in which the tempest breaks upon the house, and the house is wrapped round with terror and desolation and death.

As often as I read this chapter I seem to see the scene it describes. I see a fair mansion, among stately trees, standing in beautiful grounds, and filled and surrounded with life and joy. The sun is shining. The doors are open to its light. The men are working in the fields. The maid-servants are grinding the corn. The ladies are looking out at the open windows. Through these windows I see for the evening hours golden lamps hung on silver cords. In the court I see a deep well with wheel and bucket to supply the house with water. Everything is touched with life and joy. The swallows are shooting down from the eaves. The singing birds are filling the woods with song. It is a happy time for that house, a day in which God is pouring out His mercies, a

day to remember Him. But this is a house where God is not remembered. Those who live there receive His kindness and are unthankful. They take His gifts, but spend them on themselves. And days and years go past in which He is patient, waiting to see if they will even yet turn to Him. And then come days in which things begin to change. The early joys do not return. And day comes after day, and no pleasure with them. At last comes a day of terror. The heavens are black with clouds. The clouds dissolve in rain. More clouds overspread the sky, heavier, blacker than before. Lightnings flash; thunders roll; wind and rain beat upon the once beautiful house. The masters, bending beneath the blast, hurry in from the field. The door is shut. The ladies shrink back in terror from the windows. The maids flee from their grinding at the mill. Even the men-servants begin to tremble. Outside, the birds that made the air happy with song are either leaping and shrieking with fear or silent. On all inside fear descends; they cannot eat; death is coming upon them. The tempest snaps the cords on which the lamps are hanging; breaks the very bucket that brings up water from the well. It will soon be all over with that house. House, inhabitants,

life, joy, industry:—all are wrapped round about by the darkness, and about to be overwhelmed by the terrible tempest which has come crashing out of the sky from God.

And all that tempest, with all the ruin it works, is the picture of the destruction that descends from heaven on every life that forgets God.

II.

One of the first stories I recall from my childhood was a story of the evil of forgetting God. I remember the very spot on which it was told to me. I feel the warm grasp of the hand which had hold of mine at the time. I see once more the little seaport town stretching up from the river mouth, with its straggling "fisher town" at one extremity, and at the other its rows of well-built streets, and its town hall and academy. On this occasion we were standing on a high bank, looking down on the beautiful shore at our feet. Across the tiny harbour, and along the shore on the other side of the river, is a very different scene. What one sees there is a dreary waste of sand. No grass grows there, no trees shadow it, no house stands upon it. It is a place forsaken and desolate. It has been a desolation longer than the oldest in-

habitant can remember. But it was not always desolate. It was once a fair estate, rich in corn-fields and orchards. A stately mansion stood in the midst of it, and children played in the orchards, and reapers reaped the corn. But the lords of that fair estate were an evil race. They oppressed the poor, they despised religion, they did not remember God. They loved pleasure more than God, and the pleasures they loved were evil. To make an open show of their evil ways, they turned the day of the Lord into a day of rioting and drunkenness. And this evil went on a long while. It went on till the long-suffering of God came to an end. And then, upon a Sunday evening, and in the harvest-time, when the corn was whitening for the reaper, the riot and wickedness had come to a height. The evil lord and his evil guests were feasting in the hall of the splendid house. And on that very evening there came a sudden darkness and stillness into the heavens, and out of the darkness a wind, and out of the wind a tempest; and, as if that tempest had been a living creature, it lifted the sand from the shore in great whirls and clouds, and filled the air with it, and dropped it down in blinding, suffocating showers on all those fields of corn, and on that mansion,

and on the evil-doers within. And the fair estate, with all its beautiful gardens and fields, became a wide-spreading heap of sand and a desolation, as it is to this day.

That is the story, just as I heard it long years ago. Whether things happened in the very way the story tells, whether the story is real history, or parable drawn from history, I have never got to know. Either way it tells the lesson, and gives forth the counsel which the old preacher does in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. It tells of the evil of forgetting God. It makes plain to us that, sooner or later, to every life that will not remember God, days come which bring no pleasure, days dark with the terror of God, when the heavens above grow black, and the judgment of God breaks forth like a tempest, and everything beautiful and strong and happy in the life is overthrown, and desolation comes to house and health, and at last to life itself.

III.

I knew a lad once, who in five short years passed from days in which every day was a pleasure to days in which he had no pleasure. He passed, in that short space, out of a life on which

the smile of God rested to one on which His tempest fell.

Never a boy had a happier home or a better upbringing. He had godly and loving parents. His mother taught him about Christ. His father gave him a good example. And from God he had splendid health and an excellent mind. He had won many a prize at school.

By-and-by it was time for him to go into business, and a fine place was found for him in Glasgow. Allan was blithe to leave his school-tasks and his country home, and go down into the life of the city, of which he had heard so much. He did not think of the wicked tempters among whom his lot was to be cast, nor of the weakness of his own poor heart. But his father did. "Remember your Creator, Allan," the old man said to him as he wrung his hands in parting. "Oh, Allan, my son, keep the heart for Him." The words did make an impression on the boy. Allan himself told me, years after, that they rung in his ears for a time, and everything on the road seemed to repeat them. It was a beautiful morning in spring when he left. The buds were glimmering on the hedges like little sparks of green light. The clouds were lying in great bars across the

lower part of the heavens, and all flecked and fringed with purple. The boy thought the clouds above and the hedges below took up his father's words, and said to him, "Remember God." The great-faced clock on the church steeple of the village where the coach stopped to change horses was pointing to nine as the driver pulled up, and at that moment the bell struck out the hours. The very strokes of the bell seemed to ring out the words, "Keep the heart, Allan, for God." But by this time, Allan's heart was reaching away towards the great city. The thought of the new life he was to lead, and the new pleasures he was to taste, drove out every other thought, and, by-and-by, even the impression and memory of his father's words. He could think of nothing but Glasgow and its life. And there, at last, it came into view. From the shoulder of the great hill over which the coach had to pass, he beheld it lying in the morning light. Its great chimneys, like trees of a forest for number, stood up, belching out smoke. On went the coach. The last halting-place was passed, then the bridge over the Clyde, then the long suburb between the bridge and the city, and then Allan was in Glasgow. Horses, carts, crowds, shops, noises of all kinds, mixed and

roared together. In a moment more the coach was empty, and the poor boy was standing alone on the busy pavement.

Ah ! if from that moment he had cared to recall the words of his father, and to remember God, all might have gone well with him. But he let go the words. He did not care to have God in his thoughts. He did not care to have God ruling over him. "I am a man now," he said ; "I can rule myself."

Not all at once—bad ways never come all at once—but bit by bit he let go all he had been taught at home—religion, prayer, purity, honesty itself. Wicked, ungodly thoughts came into his heart, and he made them welcome. He made friendships with bad companions. He turned aside into evil ways. He began to frequent taverns and drink-saloons. He spent his nights in sin, and his days in neglect of duty. At the end of the fourth year he had lost his early fondness for the church and Bible, and he even began to think lightly of his parents and his home. Then began that darkening of the heavens which precedes a storm. Then came day after day in which he had no pleasure. Clouds appeared on the face of his employer, serious looks on the faces of his father's

friends. Then came warnings which he disregarded, advices which made him angry. Then came up—more terrible than all—from the depths of his own soul, mutterings of the anger of God. At last came the storm itself. He lost the esteem of his employer. Then he lost his place. His health followed, and by-and-by his life.

Before the buds put out their green lights on the hedgerows to make the fifth spring since he left his home, he was lying very still under the sod, in the muirland churchyard near where his father's cottage stood.

People tell me that on quiet mornings, about the hour poor Allan left his home, they still hear the clouds whispering, "Remember God," and even the little buds on the hedges have been heard to repeat the words. But Allan will hear them nevermore.

IV.

While my mind was still filled with these recollections and visions of tempest, I happened to be in London, and went to see the Royal Academy. I saw there some pictures in which one of the ruins which that tempest works is described. And I do not think I could better describe the evil which comes into a fair young life by forgetting

God than by telling the story which those pictures tell.

A gentle youth has come up to the University. You can see by his open face and by his ruddy cheeks that he has come from a home that cares for him. There is a mother there who has watched over him and prayed for him all his days. But now he is away from her care, and among young men of his own age. For them and him it is the time to remember God. I dare say, if the letters his companions and he got in the morning could be read, we should find in more than one of them the words: "O my beloved, remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." But neither this young man nor the companions he has taken up with are thinking of God. They are playing cards. It is midnight: one of their number, unused as yet to this life, has fallen asleep. The others are gambling. The young man whose sad story the painter has undertaken to paint is caught by this evil. He has forgotten father and mother, home and innocent days, class-duty and lessons. What includes all, he has forgotten God.

In the second picture he is older, and there is not on his face the same glow of health and home life which we saw first. He is not at college now,

nor where his college classes should have led him. He is at a place, the most evil for old or young, for rich or poor, for prince or peasant, to be. He is at a race-course. Coarse, brutish-looking, eager men are thrusting in their betting-books to him from the outside crowd. He does not yet know all the evil of their evil ways. He does not see yet that they are cheats and rogues, who want him to gamble his riches into their pockets. Alas for him! And alas for the dear mother who is praying for him! He has exchanged the innocent joys of home, and pure delights of college, for the society of chaffy idlers, and the coarse pleasures of these red-faced, shabby, vulgar men. And he is falling into their evil traps. He is writing down their tempting bets. And in his blindness he does not see that the bets he is accepting shall one day make the heavens black above him, and bring down a storm upon his head.

And too soon that storm begins to fall. In the third picture, when we next see him, several years have passed. He is married and in a house of his own. Beside him is a beautiful wife with two young children. He is in a room filled with beautiful things. If we could fix our eyes on the room

only, or go out and wander about the beautiful grounds, we should say, "Everything here has a look of peace and happiness." But there is neither peace nor happiness in the soul of its master. Days have come to him now in which he has no pleasure. He will nevermore have pleasure in all the days of his life that are to come. A terrible knowledge is in his soul. He has gambled away the last shilling he had. He has gambled away his beautiful home and the bread of his wife and children. He has gambled himself into debts which he will never be able to pay. And here, within the door of this beautiful room, darkening it by their shadow, between the poor young mother who cannot understand what has taken place, and the miserable father who understands too well, are two officers to take him away to prison. The tempest he has brought upon himself has burst out upon him. He gave his young life, his strong manhood, his love, his time, his money, to evil, and to evil ways. He sowed the wind: he is reaping the whirlwind. It has swept joy and peace out of his life. It is about to sweep away his liberty: he must go to jail. When he is lying in jail, and in misery there, the same tempest will drive wife and children out of their beautiful home.

Nothing will be left to them but shame and sorrow. Their life, like his, will be a ruin.

In the closing picture, the last burst of the tempest has come upon him. He has got out of jail, but everything beautiful in his life has been destroyed. His whole life is a ruin. He is locking the door of the poor bedroom in which he sleeps. He bends eagerly to listen, turns the key gently lest his wife should hear. His baby's cradle is near, but it appeals to him in vain. A pistol is lying on the table. In another moment he will have destroyed his life with it; and his very body shall be a ruin.

NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND.

NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND.

THAT was a very sad story which the painter painted. But the painter has not told it all. The saddest part of the story is this, that there was a way of escape even for that poor, lost soul. And he did not remember there was such a way. Having forgotten God, he had forgotten also every good thing which had ever been said to him concerning God.

But there was really a way of escape. He might have risen out of his poverty, and his shame, and his sin, if he had remembered this way. It is the way Jesus came to open up. It is the way by which He led back the poor lost women, the poor lost publicans of Judea to God. It is the way on which He is still going forth to seek and to save the lost—a way all paved with

His love—the blessed way of repentance and prayer.

I will tell you a story, which is not a painter's story, but one of real life. And it begins just where the other ends.

In the city of London, about sixty years ago, lived a man who, like the youth in the painter's story, had been forgetting God. But he was like him in little else. He had to work for his bread. He had not spent his wages in gambling, nor in attending horse-races, nor in any evil way. The evil in his life was only this: he had ceased to remember God.

God was not in all his thoughts. He went out; he came in; he lay down; he rose up, and never asked God to be with him, or to watch over him, or to bless him. He tried to live and be a husband, father, and workman without God.

But although he had forgotten God, God had not forgotten him. In mercy He sent forth His storm to smite him, and he was smitten; and days came to him in which he had no pleasure; and work failed him; and poverty descended on him; and his home was broken up. Everything had to be sold for bread; and still there came no work. They went to a poorer house; then to a house

poorer still. At last, one evening, they found themselves in a miserable cellar, without fire or food, with nothing even to sit upon except a block of wood. The children were crying for bread. "Bread, father!" they cried in their hunger—and there was no bread. The cry went into the soul of the man, and filled him with despair. And an evil thought came to him on the wings of the despair; and, yielding to that evil thought, he said to himself, as the young man in the painter's story had said: "It is more than I can bear; in the morning I shall hide myself from these cries and from this poverty which does not end, in the friendly depths of the river." And in the morning he left his home with that evil thought in his soul. He turned from his wife and children, and set his face towards the river.

It was Sunday. The streets were full of people going to morning service. He turned into a side street to escape them, but there were church-goers there also; and, in a back court in that street, a church. Perhaps it was the memory of days when he also went to church; perhaps it was the thought, "I am going into the presence of God, I will worship with His people once more before I go." He never could tell how it came about;

but, ill-dressed and unwashed though he was, and with this evil thought in his heart, he turned with the stream of worshippers into that back court, and into the church there, and sat down in a corner, in the shadow, where he could hear without being seen.

Mr. Parsons, of Leeds, was to preach that day; and this happened to be his text:—"When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." And from that text he preached a sermon on deserts, and on putting the God of Israel to the test for the springs in the desert. And among other things he said—and the poor man in the corner thought he looked straight at him as he spoke—"Oh, my poor brother, thou also art in a desert, in the bleak, bitter desert of poverty. Thou findest it hard to be without money, or work, or bread. Thou thinkest, perhaps, in thy heart, God has set me here for ever; there is no way of escape. Hast thou ever put the God of Israel to the test? What if thou art

also in a worse desert—in the desert where the soul has forgotten God? And what if thy poverty be sent to thee to bring God back to thy remembrance, and thyself back to God? Put the God of Israel to the test. Prove Him and see whether He will not turn thy wilderness into a pool, and thy dry land into springs of water."

It was as if God had spoken. The words of the preacher came into the down-crushed heart of the man, and a good thought began to battle with the evil thought in that heart; and when he came out he turned his back to the river, and set his face once more to his home.

At home there was still the hunger; the cries for bread were there just as before. But the evil thought was gone from the heart of the father, and his soul was groping along the way to God. Taking courage from what he had heard, he said to his wife, "Liza, suppose we read a bit together?" That brought the tears to her eyes. The Bible he had given her on their wedding day had long since been sold for bread; but there happened to be, on some shelf in that cellar, some leaves of the Old Testament left by those who lived there before; and in these they read. Then, in a little while, when he had found more courage,

he said, "Suppose we try to pray?" and the mother and children knelt down beside him, and he prayed. Out of the depths he cried unto God, "O God, my father's God, God of my childhood, hear my cry. I have forgotten Thee; and Thou hast brought my children, and my wife, and myself into this wilderness, where there is neither work nor bread. O God, for Jesus' sake, have mercy upon us; and for Thy mercy's sake cause springs to arise in this desert." Then they all rose from their knees. They were still hungry, but they began to feel that a little gleam of heaven had shone in upon them. And by-and-by night came, and blessed sleep, and the cries for bread were stilled.

On the very morning after this poor man had put the God of Israel to the test, and when his soul had turned from all evil thoughts, and from forgetting God, he received a letter from a friend. "There is a great order," the letter said, "come to such a shop. If you go there before ten o'clock you are sure of work." And in a corner of the letter a half-sovereign was folded up.

And from that moment the heavens grew clear for him and his. Just as Jesus stilled the black, howling tempest on Galilee, and made a calm for

the fishermen of old, so He stilled the tempest and made peace and joy for this poor man and his house. The money brought bread to the children; and before the hour named in the letter he was engaged, in the shop it told him of, for a long spell of work. And happiness came back to the home. And by-and-by it was with that home as in days long past, and God was remembered in it, and God blessed His servant at its head; and work came to him without stint, and favour of masters along with the work. More wonderful still, the workman became manager; the manager became master; and—better than all—he and his wife and his children became true servants of God.

"It is never too late to mend." In whatever wilderness men lose themselves, the way out of it is to remember God. Remember God if days should ever come to thee in which thou hast no pleasure, and He will come to thy help. Remember God if evil thoughts have already come into thy heart, and He will send thoughts of heaven in their stead. Pray to Jesus and He will come into your life and still the tempest and turn trouble into joy.

Better still, dear children, to whom evil days of the kind I have been describing have never yet

come, while it is still morning in your life, remember God. Remembering God will keep evil days away from you for ever. It will keep you young and innocent to the end of your years. And by the mercy of God, it will open the door of heaven for you when your years here have come to an end.

"MAN CANNOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE."

"MAN CANNOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE."

I.

IN an old volume in my library there is a wood-cut which I sometimes study. It is the picture of a little boy at a pastrycook's window. He is on his way to school. The morning is dark and stormy. The pavement is glistening with rain. But neither wind nor rain can force him to pass this window. Inside are piles of fancy bread, and cakes, and candies, and all sweet things. And there he stands, in the raw morning air, his right arm resting on the brass fence, his eyes fixed, his little heart going out in earnest longing for the delicious things inside that window. Not that he is a poor, ill-fed, hungry boy. His plump, round cheeks, his cosey cloak, and the end of a roll of bread sticking out of his pocket, tell that he is well fed and well cared for at home. But he is thinking to himself, as he stands

looking in through that window: "What are rolls of home bread, or home itself, or the school to which I am going, to the sweets and sugar cakes heaped inside there?"

That is the way with boys. For a long while of their lives they think that things to eat, especially sweet things, are the best things of life. Nuts shaken from the trees, berries gathered from the bush, apples dropped in the orchard, fish caught in the river by their own rod: boys think that life has nothing better than things like these. To go away to the woods or the rivers, to kindle a fire of leaves and dried branches of trees, to roast the nuts and the apples and the fish, and eat them without knife or fork, without table napkin or table, as hunters and wild Indians do: that seems to boys the very best joy that earth can give. If they were kings, and had as much money as they could tell, they would have dinners of that sort every day.

II.

And boys who think in this way are not altogether wrong. Things to eat are really good things. And the good Lord who made us has made food sweet to our taste. Sometimes it will seem, even to grown-up people, that bread must be one of the

best things in the world. When I see hungry children on the streets, I cannot help thinking what a blessing a good dinner every day would be to them. And when I pass old men and women whose white, pinched faces show that they have tasted little food that day, I cannot help thinking what a blessed thing good food would be to them. And I think the same thing as often as I read some of the sea stories which the newspapers tell.

Shipwrecked crews on lone rafts far out at sea, with never a sail in sight, with not even a bag of hard biscuit on board—driven to eat their very shoes for food—with hunger tugging at every heart, and at last with wild looks at each other, as the hunger is making them mad, and they are silently beginning to think that the lot must be cast, and the death of one become the life of all—in cases like that I do not wonder that people come to believe that land with birds on it, or a ship with food in it, or a bagful of bread, would be the best thing the life of man could see or taste.

But I intend to show you that we cannot, even in such cases as these, be satisfied, or made happy, or wise, or strong, by bread alone. If we had all the bread the world contains, or all the money of the world to buy it with—if we were always able

to go into woods and rivers and find food for ourselves, with companions whom we loved, we still could not have all that our hearts and lives need to have. By eating and drinking, by feasting with great people, or with wild people, whether on sea or land, in hunting-fields or palaces, neither boys nor men could be perfectly happy or contented or well.

III.

I read a story once of some sailors on just such a raft as I have referred to. Their very dreams were of food, of which they had none. As they sat there on the raft—straining their eyes often to look for passing ships—visions of food of all kinds, of ripe fruits, and rich meats, and pastry, and bread home-baked, floated before their souls. And each man said to himself, "Oh for one loaf such as my mother baked for us in the early days!" But the days went past and no ship appeared, and one by one, for want of bread, they began to die. After dreadful sufferings, the two who survived drifted to an island on which there were friendly natives and plenty of food. One died, but the other lived and spent some years on that island. He had food as much as he could eat, but he was not happy. He hunted, he fished,

he learned to catch all kinds of birds. He lived in tents; he was treated as a chief's son. But he was not happy. And one day, when an English ship happened to pass the island, he threw himself into the sea, and swam to the side, and said, "Take me on board, and take me home to England; I will endure hunger and poverty and hard living rather than live longer here." The man had as much food as he could eat—and on the lone raft no doubt he thought food the best thing; but you see he had found out that a man cannot live—cannot be happy—by bread alone.

IV.

I always remember the way a young girl who lived where I once lived came to learn this truth. Her home was a lonely farmhouse away up among hills, and miles away from village or town. Living where she did, she knew nothing about the pleasures which town children have. No panorama, nor concert of sacred music, is ever seen or heard near such places. But she was not without pleasures; and there was one so sweet, so always new, that she thought it must be the very best pleasure in the world. About a mile from the farm was a hill on which gorse and heather and wild violets

grew all the summer. Here and there were nut-trees, but the ground was mostly covered with bramble and bilberry bushes. The hours she spent there were the happiest in her life; and she thought a girl who had a bramble and bilberry hill had nothing more to wish for.

One day, in harvest time, she was at home with her mother and grandmother, and grandmother suddenly turned ill. It was a long way to the doctor's, and there was nobody to send but this child. The farmer and the servants were away helping a neighbour; the mother could not leave the sick grandmother; and this girl of ten years old must hurry away for the doctor. She lost no time in preparation; she dearly loved her grandmother, and her little feet seemed to fly along the road. It was the road on which the bilberry hill was, but she was not thinking of that. She was thinking only of the errand on which she was sent, and of poor sick grandmamma at home; and she was hurrying along as fast as her feet could carry her. But just as she came within sight of the hill, at the very bend of the road where the gap in the hedge was that led up to it, she saw, not a hundred yards off, a mad bull tearing along, and coming right up to meet her.

She could not go back. That never entered into her mind. To go forward was death. But here was her bilberry hill. She darted to the gap in the hedge through which she had so often passed. She fled up through the trees, thinking there might be some outlet, higher up, to another part of the road. There was no such outlet. A river on one side, a high close fence on the other, shut her in. She could only leave by the way she came; and there, to her horror, stood the furious bull. A whole hour went past, afternoon was melting into evening, and still she was a prisoner. The bull had planted himself right at the entrance, glaring up at her with a savage look. In that hour what whirls of thought drove through her soul! She thought of her poor old grandmother, of the pain she was suffering, of the possibility of her dying before the doctor could be brought. She thought of her mother's anxiety, At first she was sick with fear. Then that passed away, and she grew hungry. The hedges were covered with her favourite brambles; late bilberries also were hanging ripe at her feet and all around her. But she could not touch them. What were bilberries or brambles, or any other kind of fruit, or food to her now? It was

liberty she wanted—liberty to go her message—liberty to bring help to the dear sick one at home. She never before thought there could be anything better in life than a bramble and bilberry hill; but she learned it that day.

Her whole young heart cried up to God for liberty to reach the doctor. Although she was in mortal terror of the bull, she saw and remembered afterwards things as if she had no fear. She saw a hare running through a little space in the high fence, and wished she were a hare. She saw the birds flying about overhead perfectly free, and wished she were a bird. She cried with vexation; and what she cried for, although she could not put it in words at the time, was liberty to do her duty. "Oh, to be out of this trap!"—that was the shape her prayer took. "O Lord Jesus, send some one to drive away the bull!" And by-and-by, when the shadows of night began to fall, and while it was still not too late to bring the doctor, the Lord heard her cry, and sent some neighbours to let her free. But that day she learned—and so learned as never to forget—that hills of brambles and bilberries cannot make people happy, and that times may come, even in a child's life, when she may be where the ground is covered with her

favourite berries, and she not able to touch a single one.

v.

One day, a hunter was returning to his home, tired with the chase and faint with hunger. As he came near the tents in which his family lived, the air came about him filled with the fragrance of the richest soup. He quickened his steps. New light came into his eyes. The taste of the rich soup was already in his mouth. And just as he pushed back the curtain and stepped inside the tent, his brother was preparing to serve it out. The brother had gathered it and prepared it, and cooked it, and it was all his own. And it was the only food in the tent that day. The famishing hunter said to his brother, "Jacob, let me have some." But Jacob was not a kind brother, and he said, "If you buy it, you shall have some." Esau at that time was fonder of food than anything else, and he was almost dying with hunger. So he said, "I will give you anything you like, Jacob; but let me have the soup." Then Jacob said, "Give me your birthright." It seemed at the time like asking nothing at all. The brothers were twins, and Esau had been born first. And Jacob could never get sorrow for that out of his mind. He was always

wishing he had been born first. And now when this chance came, and his elder brother famishing and begging for food, he could not let the chance go. "Let me be elder brother, Esau, and you shall have the soup." Esau thought a very little over it—too little, as he came to see afterwards. He said to himself, "What's the birthright to me just now?" He should not have said that. It was God who had made him elder brother. It was despising the gift of God. "What's the birthright to me just now?" he said, still speaking to himself. "It is food I want. I am dying for want of food, and here is food, and the best sort of food, that will be life, and strength, and joy to me. I must have it; I cannot live without it." Then he turned to Jacob and said, "I give you the birthright—give me the food." He was a grown-up lad at that time. And there was no more said about it then. But when years had gone past, and the two lads were men, a day came when their old father had to acknowledge the birthright, and say with his dying lips which son was to be chief. When that day came, the old father was blind and seemed near to die. Jacob said to his mother, "I bought the birthright from Esau." And his mother took him one forenoon, when Esau was out hunting, and

dressed him like Esau, and made the blind old father think it was the eldest son. And Jacob the younger got the blessing. And the blessing made the birthright his. Then Esau saw the folly he had done. He had sold for a red mess what God had given him. He cried like a child. "Give me a second birthright," he said to his poor vexed father, when he came and found what had been done. But there was only one blessing to give, and Jacob had got it. In that hour Esau saw that man does not live by bread alone.

VI.

In the great kingdom of Babylon there once reigned a king who thought man could live by bread alone. And one day he invited a thousand of his lords and ladies, princes and princesses, to a great feast in his palace. Every one was dressed in gold and silver, purple, scarlet, and fine linen. There was music floating all round. Slaves came out and in carrying meat and wine and flowers and fruit. And the tables were filled with guests. But when kings have had many banquets they begin to be tiresome, and this king thought he would do a thing at this feast which might keep the tiresomeness away. He remembered that Nebuchadnezzar

his father had once been to Jerusalem, and had fought against the city and taken away all the gold and silver vessels of the temple there. So Belshazzar the son commanded those gold and silver vessels to be sent for and brought to his great feast. And everybody praised the Hebrew vessels, and they were filled with wine, and went round all the guests, and every lord and lady drank wine out of these vessels. And the king said, "Was never a feast like this; this is life, this is blessedness." But the great God at that very moment thrust out His hand from the darkness, and with His finger wrote these words on the wall in a language neither the king nor his lords could understand :—"O foolish feaster, you need righteousness more than bread to make you happy. The God whose temple your father robbed of these vessels has numbered the hours of your kingdom. You have been tried as a king and found wanting. And your kingdom is about to be given to others." Although for a long while nobody could read the words, it was something terrible to have them written on the wall in that way. Where now was the happiness the king had in his gold vessels and his wine? It was gone. He was filled with terror. All the glory of his banquet disappeared. What did that

awful hand coming out of the darkness mean? What were those terrible letters on the wall? His face became white, his knees shook, the chill of death came over him. Before that feast was ended he and his lords and ladies learned that man cannot live by banquets alone, nor by drinking wine in vessels of gold and silver, nor by any other kind of feasting which is feasting on what the Bible calls "bread alone."

VII.

Going back to the woodcut I described at the outset, I will make one more remark suggested by it. Sometimes when I look at it, it seems to say to me: "It is not little schoolboys only who stop to look in at windows. We are all, big people as well as little people, like the boy at the window, only, as we grow older, the window changes, and the things inside change as well. Instead of the pastrycook's window, it is that of some neighbour richer than ourselves, or it is the avenue leading up to some noble mansion, or it is the door opening into some public banquet, or it is a marriage party, or a general's staff, or an association of artists, or a fellowship of learned men, or the partnership of a merchant company, or a circle of high ladies of fashion."

Yes, these are the windows through which, as we grow older, we look. And as the windows through which we look are different, the things inside are different too. It is a place inside those circles of rich, learned, and fashionable people. It is possession of the things which make this life seem so beautiful. It is the wedding coaches, the gay dresses, the high companions, the honourable titles, the splendid banquets, the magnificent homes. Ah, there are boys and girls who are now as young as the boy in my woodcut, and as fond of looking into pastrycooks' windows, who will come to think, as they grow older, and look through other kinds of windows at other sweet things in life, how much better it would be to be inside, among the rich, gay people, than out, and how poor and homely their lives are when compared with the lives at which they look. But it will be a vain thought whenever it comes. To have all the fine things we see in the possession of others, to dwell in stately houses, to have troops of servants waiting on us, to have carriages at our call, and great people for our friends, and great honours to our name, that is not our life. There are thousands and tens of thousands who have attained to all that and are not so happy as they were before.

In one of the iron districts of our country, about forty years ago, lived two young married people. The husband was a blacksmith, and very industrious and temperate. The wife was thrifty and otherwise good. They were happy, but not perfectly happy. He, especially, kept looking into the lives of the people who gave him work, and wishing he had comforts like theirs. Many a time, as he sat in a corner of his forge taking the dinner which his wife brought to him, he would say to her: "I would have a carriage like this one, and a grand house like that one, and great banquets like theirs, and servants and rich dresses for you."

And it really came out so that before twenty years were over he had all these things which he had so eagerly hungered after. He had a fine mansion to live in, a fine carriage to ride in, fine dresses for his wife, great feasts for his friends, and hundreds of people to serve him. A friend of mine was once invited to one of his parties and asked to stay over night. There was a grand banquet, and lords and ladies and other great people sat down to it. When the guests were all gone, and the three drew round the fire, the husband said to his wife, "What did you think of our party?" And she said, "Indeed, John, I was

thinking all the time of it, that you and I have never been so happy, or good, as long ago when I used to take your dinner to the forge and wait till you had eaten it." "That same is my thought too at times," said the husband.

They got the grandeur and the banquets they hungered for, you see, but their happy life they had left behind.

SILLY JACK'S PARABLE.

SILLY JACK'S PARABLE.

I.

"MAN cannot live by bread alone." In order to live as God would like us to live, we need all the words which have come to us from God. Bread is only one of these words. Bread tells us of God's care for our bodies. But God is speaking to us by other things besides bread. The love with which our parents love us, and liberty, and truth, and justice, are all words which God has spoken and which we need as well as bread. To make us good, and wise, and happy, we need every good thing which has come to us from God.

One dark November night, a few years ago, two gentlemen in a gig were driving along the banks of the river Leven, and in a very lonesome part of the road they heard the cries of a child. Although

they could see nothing, they knew by the cries that not far from the road a child was in great distress. They pulled up, and found that they were beside a graveyard, and, following the sound of the cries, they came up to a little boy, six or seven years old, lying all his length on a grave, and crying on the mother who lay below to come back to him. The mother had died a few days before, and home had lost its sweetness for the child. He would not leave the grave. "I want to be beside mamma," he said, when the gentlemen wished him to come with them. At last they got him to tell where he lived—it was four miles off—and, lifting him up in their arms, they drove to the door. It was a bright enough home, with no scarceness of bread or comfort in it. It only wanted a mother's love. The poor child had food, and clothes, and comforts, as much as he could enjoy; but even a child cannot be happy with food, and clothes, and comforts alone, but with every word that comes from the mouth of God. And the best word which had come from the mouth of God for this child had been his mother's love—and that was gone!

II.

Yet even a mother's love is not enough. Moses

had love from two mothers, and he had bread, and a bright home, and ease, and splendour, but he was not happy. Ever since the kind princess lifted him out of the ark of rushes, he had lived in a king's palace and been loved by the king's daughter. He was her adopted son. He might even become king himself some day. Servants waited on him to give him whatever he asked for. Tutors waited on him to teach him all that was then known. He had horses and carriages, and yachts, and splendid clothes, and plenty of money, and everything this earth could supply to make a man happy. But he was not happy.

What he wanted more than all he had was justice and deliverance for his Hebrew kinsfolk. While he was feasting on king's meat in the palace, they were living on hard fare in the brick-kiln. While he was a free man, they were slaves. While he could say to guards and servants "Go," and they would go, "Come," and they would come, brutal men were standing over his Hebrew kinsmen, with whips in their hands, cutting into their flesh if they fainted with their toil. He had no peace day nor night. And everything reminded him of the sufferings of his people. If he went to town, he saw the bricks they had made being

carried along the streets. If he went to the country, he came on the kilns where they were suffering. If he visited the brick-kilns, he heard the crack of the lash on every side of him, and the sharp cry of the lashed one's pain. Now and again, too, riding in a royal carriage, and dressed like a prince, a Hebrew would pass him on the road carrying straw for the bricks. And the poor bent form of the slave would straighten up, and his eyes would cast one look into the carriage, as much as to say, "You there—I here!" And all these things cut into the soul of the young man. And he was very sad.

One day it happened to him to be near a brick-field. The air was filled with the sickening vapour of the clay. He saw crowds of his kinsfolk moving about at their dreary task. His heart was sore for their misery. Just at that moment a poor slave rushed out into the road, pursued by one of the taskmasters, his back all cut and bleeding with the lash, and fell dead at the feet of Moses. The hidden fountains of anger, which had been gather ing and growing hotter within him for years, burst forth at the sight, and, rushing at the cruel taskmaster, he killed him in his wrath.

He knew well enough that his own life would

be taken if it were known. But he had made up his mind. It was better to die than to live as he had been living. He could no longer live on splendid clothes and royal banquets. His soul wanted God's justice for his poor oppressed and trampled kinsfolk. His soul yearned for their deliverance. He knew how God meant them to become His people; and he wanted them to be free that they might go and be His people.

Dear to him, no doubt, was the love of his adopted mother, dear also the books he had learned to read; but a great voice from God was speaking in his heart, and bidding him leave Egypt and kings' houses, and prepare to work out the will of God in delivering His people. And he left all and went.

III.

Hundreds of years ago, in one of the old Etruscan cities of Italy, there lived a young and wealthy lawyer whose name was Jacob Bendetti. He had a beautiful young wife, and he and she were once invited to a splendid ball.

Now something came in his way, so that the husband could not get to the ball at the beginning, and his wife had to go with some friends. But in a little while he arrived. When he came into the

room everything was in confusion. His beautiful young wife had been seized with a sudden illness and there, or on the way home, she died.

Jacob was almost in despair. He gave up his business, sold all his possessions, gave his money to the poor, and became a minister of the gospel. People laughed at him for doing this. Always there are people who laugh at things noble or good. They said it was so silly for a rich young fellow to cry as he cried for his wife, and to sell all he had and give all his money away. And there was another thing these people thought silly. He not only began to preach to poor people about Jesus, but he wrote poems, and prayers, and parables for them in their own mother tongue. "Oh, so silly!" cried the people who used to go to balls with him. So they called him "Silly Jack," and he is known as Silly Jack to this day.

But it wasn't he who was silly; it was the ignorant and stupid butterfly people who had not sense to see that he was wise.

I was reading some notes about the life and writings of this man lately, and among these notes I came upon a parable which I thought would make a good sermon for the boys and girls I speak to.

The parable is this: "Once upon a time there was a fair young maiden who had five brothers. One was a musician, the second was a painter, the third was a merchant, the fourth was a cook, and the fifth was a builder.

Now this fair young maiden had a beautiful diamond which her father had given her, and each of the brothers wanted it for himself.

The first who sought it was the musician. He came to her and said, 'Sell it to me; I will play you some beautiful music for it.' But she said, 'And when the music is ended I should have nothing;' and she refused to sell her diamond for music.

Then came the painter. 'I will paint you a splendid picture for your diamond,' he said. But she replied, 'Your splendid picture might be stolen, or its colour might fade. I will not sell my diamond to you.'

Next came the merchant. 'O sister,' he said, 'I will bring you such spices and perfumes from the East in my ships as you never smelled the like of; and I will give you sweet smelling roses and lilies—a garden full.' But she said, 'The perfumes will cease to please me, and the roses and lilies will fade.'

Then the cook came up and said, 'Dear sister, I will prepare for you a splendid banquet of the finest, richest things you could eat: give your diamond to me.' But she said, 'After the banquet I should be hungry again and my diamond gone: no, I will not sell it to you.'

Then the builder came. He offered to build her a beautiful palace to live in—a palace that might do for a queen. 'But a palace is filled with cares, even to its queen,' she said, 'and I cannot sell my diamond for a house full of cares.'

At last, when all the brothers had been refused, came the prince of a great kingdom and said he wished to buy the diamond. 'And what will you give for my diamond?' she asked. 'I will give myself,' he said; 'myself, and all I possess.' Hearing that, the young maiden answered, 'I accept that gift. I will be yours and you shall be mine for ever.' Whereupon she gave him the diamond."

Now that is the parable, and here is the interpretation. The fair young maiden is you, or your sister, or any young person you know. The father is God. And the diamond given by the father is the soul. The five brothers are the five senses, each of which wishes to get the soul all to itself.

The ear comes first, and wants the soul to give itself altogether to the pleasures of music. "That is the great life," it says, "just to be going to concerts and listening to fine airs and fine songs." The eye comes next and wishes the soul to give itself away to fine sights, beautiful paintings, beautiful statues, beautiful sights on the hills and the fields. And the other senses, one after another, come and want to get the soul all to themselves—to fine gardens, to fine parties, or to fine houses.

But the soul sees that all these things perish as they are used. The soul knows that ear, and eye, and smell, and touch, and taste, are only little bits of one's being; and that it would never do to give itself away to a mere little bit of its being. The soul has learned that nothing can fill the whole being except God Himself who made it. And it says, "What would it profit me though I should gain all that the five senses could bring to me if I were to lose my very self and be cast away?"

There are plenty of people who sell their souls for music, painting, fine dinners, and beautiful gardens, and fine houses. But no wise child will do it. No one who knows Christ will do it. Christ alone is worthy to have the soul. He gave Himself for the soul; Himself and all that He has.

And the wise maiden in the parable knew that. The pleasures of earth were nothing to her in comparison with Christ. "What are fine parties, beautiful pictures, or splendid mansions, if at the end I should lose my soul?" So she gave her soul to Christ. And she got what was better than pictures, or palaces, or fine gardens. She got Christ Himself.

True happiness is to have Christ's love in our hearts. Does Christ love me? Do I love Christ? That child has begun to live the true life who can say "yes" to those two questions. And that is the life which Jesus brought from heaven to us. He is offering it to us when He is telling about His Father's love. He is inviting us to it when He says, "Come unto Me." Himself is the true life. Himself is bread, and life, and love. To have Jesus for our friend, and His life in our heart, is better than gold and silver, or fine mansions, or banquets with the great. It is the grand secret of a good life. It is the true way to happiness. It is a life that will never die. And it is the life which prophets and apostles and saints are living before God's throne in heaven.

A BOY'S ACT, AND WHAT IT LED TO.

A BOY'S ACT, AND WHAT IT LED TO.

I.

IN a certain Austrian stable, between seventy and eighty years ago, a young Englishman of the name of Baldwin was opening a box which had just come from London. It was the time when English racing and hunting, and English ways of managing and training horses, began to be copied by the young noblemen of the Continent. Baldwin had been brought from England to manage the stud of an Austrian nobleman. He had a good salary, and besides his salary a certain profit on all the saddlery that might be required. The box which he was opening was filled with saddles and other horse-gear. Now the man who supplied these saddles was a very worthy and pious man, and he was a director of the London Tract Society. And when he was putting in the saddles, he slipped in beside them a bundle of tracts. "Who knows the

good they may do?" he said to himself, as he put them in. When Baldwin came to the bundle of tracts he said to a young English boy he had brought with him as his assistant, "What can this square parcel be?"

"Tracts," replied the boy.

"Tracts are they?" said Baldwin, a little angry, "then that is the place for them." And suiting the action to the word, he shied the tracts to the farthest corner of the room. Baldwin was a frank, generous fellow, but he was not religious. He was quite ignorant of Christ and the Bible. But he was not the least angry when his boy assistant said to him in the evening, "If you are not going to read these tracts yourself, Mr. Baldwin, you might let me have them home." And Baldwin gave the tracts to the boy. And at that moment, although neither of them knew it, the battle of life began for them both.

The boy read the tracts. And God blessed the reading of the tracts to him, and he learned many things he did not know before. Among other things, he learned that the Lord's-day is not a common day, but a day of rest and worship; and that it is wrong to do on the Lord's-day certain things which it is not wrong to do on other days.

And although he was only a boy, his conscience went along with the tract that told him this. And he saw that the nobleman and Baldwin and himself were all acting contrary to God's purpose for that day. For in Austria, as in France and other places on the Continent, they are so unhappy as not to have learned the true purpose of the Lord's-day. And they have their great hunts and races chiefly on that day.

The boy, so soon as he saw all this, came to his master and said—

"Mr. Baldwin, I wish to give up my place. I have been reading these tracts, and I have learned that it is wrong to hunt and race on the Lord's-day."

At first Mr. Baldwin was angry, then he was vexed ; but when he could not move the boy from his purpose, he said, "Well, I am sorry to lose you, but if you cannot work on Sunday, you are of no use here." And the boy left.

The boy had fought his first battle against wrong-doing well. And although his master did not see it at the time, he had summoned Baldwin too into the battle-field.

II.

Some months went past, and Mr. Baldwin had to come to England to buy horses for his master. He

was one day riding on the top of the stage-coach from York to London, and he began to have some pleasant talk with a gentleman sitting by his side. The gentleman had some information to give about Yorkshire, and Baldwin repaid him with stories about Vienna. "But do you know," he said, "the strangest thing I have seen since I went to Austria was a little boy I had, giving up his place in my stable, because he thought it stupid to run horses on Sunday! Did you ever hear the like of it?" The gentleman said nothing at the time; but at the end of the journey he took a book from his bag and said,—

"This has been a very pleasant talk we have had together. I should like to leave you this memorial of it, if you will promise to read it."

"And that I will," said Baldwin, "and I assure you I shall read it." And the two travellers parted.

When Baldwin went back to Vienna two gifts from the good Lord were waiting for him. The first was a beautiful wife, well educated, well principled, and with good friends. The second was the opportunity of leisure to read the book he had received in England. It was the Bible; but although he had come from England, he

had never read it before. But now he drew to it. And like a thorough man as he was, he began at the beginning and read right on to the end. The Book moved him as no other book had done. He was surprised—then delighted—then melted. When he came to the story of Christ and of His death, he was fairly broken down. He cried as if he had been a child in pain. And then he became as happy as an angel before God. God had opened his eyes to read the Book aright, and He inclined his heart to believe the Book. And the end was that he learned that God had given His Son to him and poor sinners like him. And he gave his heart to God. And a new light came from the Book on everything. He saw things he had never seen before, and things he saw before looked different. And what was strange, the Book itself seemed different. Every word of it now seemed to come to him direct from the lips of God. And he began once more at the beginning and read parts of it again and again.

One day he came on these words : " Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work." Again and again he came

on similar words. He found the Sabbath shining like a great light in Paradise, and in the time of the patriarchs, and in the wilderness, and in the Holy Land, and in the life of our Lord; and in like manner the Lord's-day, in the practice of the Apostles. And as he read, he remembered the boy who, to be true to God's purpose in this day, had given up his place. It all came back to him just as it happened. And he saw at a glance that he, too, had that same battle to fight, which his boy had fought and won.

III.

His first difficulty was his marriage. "Ah," he said, "if I were as the young boy was, alone, it would be easy to decide. But I am married, and have a house to keep up." And then there was his wife herself. She had been accustomed to theatres and balls, and she was an Austrian, and might not sympathise with him at all. His duty was plain, but he had to fight his way to it. "Shall I first go home and tell my wife? Shall I wait until I convert her to my way of thinking?" The difficulty was very great. But he thought of Christ, and of Christ giving up all things for him, and of Christ's words: "Whosoever doth not bear

his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." And he became strong to do God's will, and there and then resolved to imitate the boy and give up his place. So he went to his master and told him, almost in the very words his stable-boy had used, the position in which he stood. The master thought at first he wanted more salary, and said a little angrily, "Now, Baldwin, no more of this. You want a rise, and you shall have it, as I can't do without you."

"No, my lord," said Baldwin, "think better of me than that. I mean what I say—unless you can, and I should be most thankful if you could, relieve me of Lord's-day work."

"Well, Baldwin, that is not once to be thought of. If we don't take out our horses on Sunday, we need not have them at all." And that was true for Austria. And Baldwin had no other word to utter. He gave up his place, and then with a heavy and anxious heart turned his face to his home.

To tell his wife; to reason with her; to try to bring her round to his way of thinking; to get her to see that he had not acted foolishly or unkindly—this was the next battle he had to fight.

But it is God's way, when a soul has fought one part of a fight of faith well, to come to his help

and fight, or send His angels to fight, by his side. And Baldwin found this—to his unspeakable joy—when he went home. He told the whole history of his soul, told about the boy and the Book, and his own discoveries in the Book, and the struggle and the victory. And then he said, "My dearest love, do not judge me harshly. It was the Lord's will; I could do no other."

His wife put her arm about his neck and said, "There is nothing to regret. Let us give God thanks rather. God has been preparing me—although I did not know it—for this very event."

And then she told him how her old life had become distasteful to her, and how she, too, had been led to the Saviour, and had secretly been longing for the opportunity to tell her husband of the great things which the good God had done for her soul. That was a happy hour for Baldwin and his wife.

IV.

Five years went past. Baldwin and his wife were poor. When he left the Austrian nobleman's he went to Brussels, and then to London, trying to make a business by bringing Dutch horses to England. But he did not succeed.

And all through those years he was fighting a grim fight with unbelief and despair. Thoughts would come into his soul at times that God had forsaken him; that He did not care for him, and did not love him. But ever he fought down those thoughts, and sometimes he would say to his patient and noble wife, "Though God slay us, we will trust in Him." And she would answer, smiling, "Baldwin, Amen."

Still it was a hard time for him and her. When he brought over the last lot of horses, he called on a friend of his, the head cooper in Stanbury's immense establishment, where between two and three hundred horses were kept, and told him everything, and said, "If I do not sell these horses well I shall be at the end of my means."

The good man went to the counting-house and spoke to Mr. Stanbury himself; and Mr. Stanbury came over to the cooperage and saw Baldwin, and had a long talk with him, but could not buy his horses. That was the last chance of a good bargain gone; and Mr. Baldwin, with as heavy a heart as ever he had, knew that he was now penniless in the world.

His shifty, cheery wife took a little shop near one of the wharves of a canal that came into

London, and Baldwin went about every day, and every hour of the day, looking for employment. He found many friends. The gentleman who gave him the Bible got to hear of him, and met with him again, and he and some friends from Brussels, and all who knew him, were anxious to help the worthy man into work. But it seemed as if every day made the prospect more gloomy than the day before. God had planned out for him another battle before He would bring him to rest.

v.

One day, after another fruitless application for work, he was returning to his poor home beside the canal, when his way happened to pass the entrance into the famous stables of Hattersal. Mr. Hattersal at that moment was at the door. "Why, Baldwin, is that you? Have you given up that fine place in Austria? And what are you doing now?" Mr. Hattersal knew Baldwin since his boyhood, and knew that there was not in all England a better judge of horses. Mr. Baldwin told him so much of his story, how he had tried to make a trade with Dutch horses, and what he was in search of now. "Well, Baldwin, I am surprised, with your knowledge of horses, you should

have any difficulty. I will tell you what. To-morrow is the great day at Epsom, and I am going down. I will give you a seat in my drag; and I will introduce you to the leading stewards of the race-course. I will recommend you, as a good judge of horses, to begin with; and you will tell gentlemen on what horses to bet; and if you are what you used to be, your fortune is as good as made."

It was a great offer, and it was kindly meant. And it was all true—that it was employment, position, and wealth for him. Mr. Baldwin took all that in at a glance, and with his whole heart he thanked Mr. Hattersal; but he said, "Give me half an hour to consider your kindness."

Not far from the stables some new houses were being built. Baldwin almost ran till he came to them. And then he turned aside, went over the rubbish, and through to a quiet dark place where no eye could see him, and threw himself upon the ground. His first words when he was able to speak were, "My God, come to my help." For he had seen the splendour of the offer, the certainty of the prospect, the deliverance of his wife from the mean house and toil, and the wealth. But he had also seen that the life to which he was

invited was next door to a life of vanity and crime. The gambling, the cursing, the madness, the cruelty, the meanness, the fraudulence, the low life and degradation of the race-course of England flashed into his mind. Could a Christian touch it; or be what one who even touches it is required to be? His soul shrank from the pollution. His love for his wife, his honest desire for employment, came up strong before his soul. But he was faithful in the fight. "Though He slay me, I will trust Him. My God, my God, come to my help." And God did come to his help. And he rose strong to do God's will. And then he returned to Mr. Hattersal, and with thanks—ay, and choked-down tears—he declined the tempting offer.

VI.

Then a second time he was to experience how God helps His faithful ones in the after-shocks of a battle when they have been true at the beginning. That same week, in Stanbury's establishment, the superintendent of horses was ordered to reside in Spain for his health, and Mr. Stanbury came to the master cooper and said, "How would Baldwin do for our horses? I liked the look of the man." And that day Baldwin was suddenly lifted out of

poverty into affluence. He was appointed to the vacant place. It was the crown which the Lord put on his head for fighting the good fight of faith.

There is just one other of his life-battles I must tell you about. But this time it was for others, and not for himself he fought. His masters soon came to see the worth of the servant they had got. He saved more than his salary to them the very first year. But in his new situation there was one thing which gave him great anxiety. There were two or three hundred horses in the establishment, and nearly as many carters. And these men spent the whole of every Lord's-day in the stable, grooming the horses and cleaning the stalls. He remembered his stable-boy in Austria. He thought of his own early hardships. Was it necessary, was it fair, that these poor fellows should be deprived of their Sundays? He sought an interview with the head partner, and asked permission to make an experiment or two. The partners were excellent men. They said his predecessor had always told them it was a work of necessity and mercy. But if it could be altered no one would rejoice more than themselves.

He began by giving the half of the men a half-holiday on Sunday. And that worked very well.

Then he gave the half of them the whole day, so that every carter had his alternate Sunday. Then he went a step further and gave the forenoon to half those that remained, and the afternoon to the second half. Then he found that every man might have a whole Sunday and a half Sunday turn about all the year through. And a blessing came upon his work. And surely these men called him blessed.

Now that is the end of the story.

I have no doubt he had other battles to fight; but that is all I ever heard of his interesting life.

I hope my telling you these bits of it will help you to understand both that you and I have battles of faith to fight, and the kind of battles we have to fight.

I wish I could tell you what became of the stable-boy. But his after-life is wholly unknown to me. I only know that he did not live in vain, and that he was, though young, the means of saving a soul. But if you happen to have heard of a brave old man of the last generation, whose life had been one long battle for righteousness and truth—who knows?—that may have been the boy who was faithful to God's law in an Austrian stable more than seventy years ago.

PITCHERS AND LIGHTS.

PITCHERS AND LIGHTS.

IN the wonderful chapter in Judges which tells the story of Gideon's victory there are so many lessons that we might read it every Sunday for a month, and find new lessons each day. It is only one of these lessons I am going to bring out for you at present. And I will call it the lesson of the pitchers and the lights.

It is an old story now. The thing it tells of happened more than three thousand years ago—long before Elijah's time, before King David's time, a hundred years even before Samson's time. And that was a very sad time for the children of Israel. Moses and Joshua had been dead more than two hundred years. And they had no prophet, or king, or great captain to help them. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

It was just then, when they had no king, that

the wicked nations of Midian and Amalek said to each other, "Come, they have no king in Israel, nor king's soldiers, let us go in and seize their land." And they came,—a great army, like locusts in number and cruelty,—and filled the whole rich plain of the river Jordan, and spoiled the people of their tents, and their cattle, and their food. The shepherds and farmers fled to the hills. And there, away in hidden places, which the robbers could not reach, they sowed their wheat and their barley, and fed the flocks they had saved.

But the good Lord took pity on His poor Israelites. And He sent an angel to say that He would raise up a captain to fight for them. And then one of the strangest things happened. The man God chose to be their captain was not a soldier at all, but simply a good, pious farmer, who, since his boyhood, had worked among the wheat-fields of the hills for his father, and had kept love for God in his heart. The Lord chose this man, Gideon, the son of Joash, and said to him, "Be thou Captain under Me in this war."

Thirty thousand people flocked to Gideon, to be soldiers under him, when they heard the news. And then another strange thing took place. The Lord said to Gideon, "Thirty thousand soldiers

are too many for the battle which thou must fight." So twenty thousand were sent home. But the Lord said again: "Ten thousand also are too many. Bring them down to this brook, and bid every man of them drink." And when they were there, the most part of them, nine thousand seven hundred of them, went down on their knees, put their lips to the water, and that way drank. But three hundred made a cup of their hands and raised the water to their lips, and in that way drank. Then the Lord said: "By the three hundred that lapped the water from their hands I will have this battle fought." So all the rest went back to their hiding-places among the hills.

And now took place the strangest thing of all. The Lord commanded Gideon to divide the three hundred into three companies, and give each man a ram's-horn, an earthen pitcher, and a light hidden in the pitcher. He was to go into the battle at midnight with these. And when every man had got his horn and his pitcher and light, on a certain night Gideon gave the word. And the three companies moved down in silence from the hills to where the tents of Midian and Amalek covered the plain. Silent, unseen, moved the three hundred, nearer and nearer to the sleeping hosts. Then Gideon

planted his men all round the camp. Then he blew a great blast on his own horn, and cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Then every man did as his captain had done, blew a loud blast on his horn and raised the same shout. And then they all broke their pitchers and let the lights flash forth. And at the sound of the shouting and of the horns the robber-army started from its sleep. The soldiers heard the sudden sounds, and, looking out, saw the flashing lights. All round and round the camp they saw lights moving through the darkness; they heard horns blowing. The air was filled with noises, with the shouts of mighty voices, saying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Sudden fear took hold of them. They rushed out of their tents. From tent to tent, over the whole camp, rushed forth the terror-stricken soldiers into the darkness, until at last the whole army was in flight. And then Gideon and his men pursued. And then came down from their hiding-places on every side other fighters of Israel to help. And there was a great pursuing of the robbers, and some were killed, and the rest were utterly chased out of the land; and the land was cleared of its foes.

That is the story of the wonderful victory which

this great hero gained. He went down into the battle with only three hundred men, with only trumpets, pitchers, and lights for weapons, and the mighty hosts of Midian and Amalek, thousands upon thousands, fled before him and were driven from the land.

More than a thousand years after, when the story of this victory had come to be a common lesson in the houses and schools of the Jews, it was read in the hearing of a little boy named Saul who lived in the once famous city of Tarsus. And it made a great impression on him, and went deep into his heart. And long years after, when he was an old man, and the Apostle Paul, he remembered it. And once, when he was in the city of Philippi, and writing a letter to the Corinthians, he put what he had learned from that story into a letter in these words—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure (this treasure of light) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

You see the old apostle has remembered all the story—the pitchers, the out-flashing of the

lights at night, and the excellent power that gained the victory. Especially he remembered this—it was this that had gone most deeply into his spirit—that the power in all battles for God must be the power of God. Paul is writing of the sufferings which he and his fellow-workers had to endure. He and they seem no better in the eyes of Paul than earthen pitchers—poor, weak, fragile creatures, that any blow might break, who one day should certainly be broken. But poor and fragile though they be, they are vessels carrying a divine light, a life kindled by God, and a power which cannot be destroyed, which, even if those who carry it were broken to pieces and lying in the dust, should still shine forth and win battles for God.

And just that is the lesson I wish to draw from this old story of Gideon's pitchers. As Paul remembers it, and translates it into Christian truth for us, it becomes part of the good news of Christ. It brings the happy assurance to every heart who hears it, that even a child may be a vessel to carry the power of God. Weak people, little people, fragile people—God uses them all. God can fill the weakest and the most fragile with strength for His work. He asks only that the heart shall receive

His life. The outside may be no better than earthenware, but inside there will be an excellent light and power of God.

And that is the New Testament picture of all Christians, whether young and feeble, or old and strong. They are all, in themselves, but vessels—and vessels neither of gold or silver, but of clay—poor fragile things, just like earthen pitchers. We should be worthless, only God puts His life into our hearts. We should be uncomely, only God puts His beauty into our life. And we should be utterly feeble, and unable to fight one battle for truth or righteousness, only God puts His Spirit into ours. And when the power of that comes upon us, we become strong like Gideon.

More wonderful still: that is a picture of our dear Lord. He also, as a man, was but an earthen vessel. He was made in the likeness of men, and became a partaker of our flesh and blood for this very end, that through death He might show forth the power and the glory of the divine life within.

You know how cruelly His enemies put Him to death. "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him," they said. They nailed Him to the cross. They did all that evil hearts could devise to destroy Him. They broke the vessel which contained

His life. But by this very cruelty they brought defeat and shame upon themselves and glory to Him. From that hour He began to be a conqueror and a deliverer. Power went forth from His broken body, just as strength and victory shone forth from Gideon's broken pitchers. And ever since, His enemies have been driven from before His face. And over all the earth this day, from the east and the west, from the north and the south, multitudes are flocking into His kingdom, and rejoicing to call Him King.

A GENTLE MASTER AND HIS SCHOLAR.

A GENTLE MASTER AND HIS SCHOLAR.

I.

I INTEND to tell you to-day of a Master who was denied by a scholar He loved, and yet was so gentle that He continued to him His love.

The scholar was Peter; the Master was Christ.

It was the last evening of our Lord's earthly life. It was the evening on which He girt a towel about Him, and washed the feet of His disciples,—the very evening also on which one of these disciples was to sell Him for thirty pieces of silver.

The Lord and the disciples were sitting in an upper room in Jerusalem. They had come to this room to eat the Feast of the Passover. And that itself was a solemn thing to do; for there was prayer, and there was chanting of psalms, and there was the going back of their thoughts to the

awful night long before in which the firstborn of Egypt were slain, when the angel of death passed over the houses of the children of Israel.

But on this particular evening there were thoughts in the minds of all who were in that upper room which filled them with concern and sorrow. It was the last passover they were to eat together. Jesus began to tell them of His going away, and of the death He had to die. Very soon, the disciples He had watched over and prayed for would be as sheep without a shepherd. Very soon, the Master they had learned so much from would be taken from them by enemies, and by wicked hands put to death. The heart of the Saviour was very sad. One of His own disciples, one who had eaten the Passover with Him, was gone forth to betray Him. He had seen the traitor rising from the table and stealing out in the darkness to do his evil deed. The rest of the disciples would forsake Him too.

"Yes," He said, putting His sad thoughts into words, "ye shall all be offended because of Me, this night."

But as soon as these sorrowful words were spoken, Peter cried out that such a thing could never happen. One at least of his dear Lord's

disciples would never do a thing so base. "Though all the others should be offended because of Thee," he said, "yet will I never be offended."

I think I see the Lord turning to the disciple who spoke in this brave way. I am sure it was with a heart filled with pity He said to him, "O Peter, this very night, before the cock crow twice, thyself shalt deny Me thrice."

Peter could not bear to think that he should do a thing so bad. He hated the very thought of it. And he cried out, and I fancy with tears in his eyes, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. I am ready to go with Thee both unto prison and death."

And he really thought he was ready to do all he had said. For he loved his Master with his whole heart, and meant to be brave and true, and stand by Him to the end.

In a little while the meeting in the upper room came to an end. And they left the upper room and went to a place called the Garden of Olives. And into that garden Jesus went to pray to His Father for strength. He often went there to pray. And there Judas knew he should find Him. And to this place he brought a band of rude men with

swords and staves to seize Him and take Him to the priests.

It was a very quiet and lonesome place. And it looked more lonesome because it was night, and was filled with trees that looked all black at night. But there was no quietness in it after Judas came. The people he brought with him were rude and noisy, and came round about the Lord to lay hold of Him. And as they brought lights with them, and the lights went moving to and fro among the trees, any one standing near could see what they had come to do. Peter understood in a moment what they had come to do. He saw the traitor also, and saw him giving a false kiss to the Lord. And he heard the rude cries and he saw the fierce looks of the traitor's band. And perhaps he saw some one laying hands on Jesus to seize Him. Whatever took place, Peter was filled with anger. His brave soul flamed out in anger. Were rude hands like these to be laid on the Lord he loved so well? It must not be. He would defend his Master. He would show them that one at least was not that night to forsake Him. And thinking these thoughts and stirred by that anger, he suddenly drew forth a sword and began to strike with it, and struck one of the servants of the high priest on the ear.

If it had been by swords the Lord was to be served that night, Peter might not have failed. But the Lord blamed him for using a sword. And then came into Peter's heart the beginning of fear, and with that an evil thought about himself. He said to himself, "This Judas band have lights, and they must have seen me as I struck with the sword." When the band left the garden, and hurried into the city, the lights flashing on everything as they went, Peter felt that they were flashing back on him. "If I follow I shall be found out," he thought. But how could he refuse to follow, when he had said, "I will go with Thee both into prison and death"? He followed, but it was with halting steps. Up through the silent streets raged the noisy band, as peaceful citizens in their homes were lying down to rest. Up through the very streets in which, but the other day, Jesus was welcomed as a king, He was now dragged as a prisoner. On, from one place to another, they dragged Him, till they came where His worst enemies were waiting, all athirst for His blood. It was the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, to which they brought the Lord. Peter still followed, but at a distance, and hiding in the shadows behind.

The palace was built like a square of houses,—an open court in the centre, the rooms all round, and an entrance-hall at one side of the square. A maid was waiting at the hall door to let them in. She held her lamp against every face as it passed. Now was Peter's first trial. Now was Peter to learn how much easier it is to strike with a sword in a dark place than to speak a brave word in the light. He shrank back. That lamp would discover him. The others would see the man who had struck with the sword. But then he looked wistfully as his dear Master was led in, and across the open court and into the judgment-hall out of his sight. Then, still looking through the gateway, he saw the men who had taken Jesus into the judgment-hall come out again into the court and kindle a fire. The night was cold, the fire was tempting. He would be nearer his Lord if he were inside. At last he ventured in. And it was then, as the maid held her light to his face, and saw his troubled look, he uttered his first denial. "Thou?" she said. "Thou art a follower of that man?" Alas for Peter! His fear for himself came over him like a great wave of the sea, and he said, "Woman, I know Him not." After a while, as he stood near the fire, another said, "Art

not thou one of this man's people?" And a second time, with angry voice, Peter denied that he was.

All this time he could see the judgment-hall and the crowd of evil men who were bearing false witness against his Lord. And he could see, standing bound before them, the form of the Lord Himself. But at last, the long night was coming to an end. The night clouds were beginning to break. And the grey streaks of morning were coming faintly into the sky. It was then that some word which Peter spoke told the people standing about that he was from Galilee. They said to him, "Your very speech tells what you are. You are a follower of the Galilean there." A third time Peter denied that he knew Him whom they called the Galilean, and this time he denied with oaths and curses. But even as he was speaking, he saw a movement in the judgment-hall. And his Lord turned round and looked at him. Then sank Peter's heart within him. His Lord had warned him that he should deny Him three times before the cock crew, and at that very moment the cock began to crow. The Lord's look pierced him like a sword. He saw his cowardice, his ingratitude, his sin. And rushing out, to be alone, he sobbed and cried as if his heart would break.

It was a great sin which he had sinned. He had been ashamed of Christ. It was a great fall from a good and blessed state. He had been a lover of Jesus. He was the first to see and say, that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. And now, by his three denials, the fair form of his love and life was marred to the very heart.

II.

That is the first half of the story of the scholar who denied his Master. Listen now to the other half, to the story of the gentleness of the Master who still kept him in His love.

I will begin this half by saying, that there are two beautiful things in every gentle heart. Those two things are honour and mercy.

To be brave for goodness, to be true to friends who are good, not to be ashamed to say, "I am on their side," to be a hater of meanness and untruth, and to be all this, even if, in being it, one should have to suffer scorn or beating,—that is honour.

To pity friends who through fear have not been brave or true, to forgive them for their want of braveness and take them back into your love, even when it is the goodness in your own life they have not been true to,—that is mercy.

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is the story of one who failed in honour: the story of the Master's love to him is the story of One who did not fail in mercy.

This Master is very gentle. What is said in the old psalm may be said of Jesus. "Such pity as a father hath to his children" the Lord had to Peter. He knew how weak he was. He remembered that although Peter was a man in years, he was only a child in the power to be honourable and true. And therefore He was not angry with him. He did not say, "I will have nothing more to do with this scholar." He said, "I will have compassion upon him, and remember his evil deed no more."

And that is the first thing to understand both about Peter and about the gentleness of Christ.

Peter was as yet very weak. And he did not know how weak he was. If he had known his weakness, he would not have said, "Though all others forsake Thee, yet will not I." That is a lesson we have all to learn. And many who come to be very strong for goodness and truth in their old age are as weak as Peter in their youth. About two hundred years ago there lived in France a very holy lady, who for her holiness and goodness was by bad people put in prison. Her name was

Madam Guyon. When this lady was a young girl at school, she was very religious, and had, even then, a great love for God. But one day she said to the other girls of the school that she loved God so well that she could die for Him. And the other girls saw, or thought they saw, that this was only a boast, and that it sprang from pride. So they agreed to put her to a very cruel test. They went to her and said that a message had come from God commanding her to give up her life for Him. And then they led her into a room, on which they had spread a great white sheet to receive her blood. And they ordered her to kneel in the centre of it, that she might be put to death. Then her heart failed her, just as Peter's did. Then she found out how weak and proudhearted she had been. And she cried out that she could not die until her father gave his consent. But it was the beginning of strength to his pious girl to have found out her weakness and her pride of heart. And it was the beginning of strength to Peter to find out how weak and full of the fear of death he was. And the gentleness of the Master was shown in this, that He put the blame of the denial and the untruth on his weakness, and did not say, "He has a bad and wicked heart."

Another beautiful thing in the gentleness of the Master was, that although Peter failed to be true to Him, He did not fail to be true to Peter. When the Lord takes any one into His love, He does not easily let him go. He had taken Peter into His love. And having begun to love him, He loved him unto the end. He showed that, by the look which He gave Him when the cock crew. The Lord had been thinking of Peter and praying for him even when evil men were speaking and working evil against Himself at the judgment-seat. And when the poor, weak disciple had lost all his braveness through the fear which had come upon him, and denied his Master the third time, and this time with oaths and curses, the Master turned and gave him this look. It was a look of sorrow, not of anger. If the look could have been changed into words, it would have said, "O Peter! O my poor, weak disciple! did I not forewarn thee of this?" A very tender look it would be, like the look of a mother who finds her child in a serious fault: a look with vexation in it, but also with healing and help in it. That look recalled Peter to himself. It made him see two things at the same moment—both how truly Jesus loved him, and how little he deserved His love. That look

made him ashamed of his want of honour and truth. It opened the fountain of tears. It led him to repent of the base words he had spoken. And the gentle Master intended that it should help His disciple in this very way.

And in yet another way the Master showed that He was true to His disciple. Peter was one of the first He thought about after He rose from the grave. So loving, so gentle was He, so truly did He wish this disciple to know that he was forgiven, that when He was sending a message to the disciples about His resurrection, He mentioned Peter, and only Peter, by name. "Go your way," He said to the women who came to the grave with sweet spices and found Him risen—"go your way, tell the disciples *and Peter*, that Jesus goeth before you into Galilee."

But, more gentle still, the Master not only forgave His disciple, but healed him of the evil in his heart. He did not make light of the evil which His disciple had done. He laid bare that evil, so that Peter could not but see it. He laid bare the very thoughts and feelings of Peter's own heart, that he might learn how he had been led into his evil deed. He showed him the pride, the self-esteem, the over-confidence in himself, which

had led Peter to say, "Though all be offended with Thee, yet will not I."

But He did not stop there. Jesus knew what Peter was yet ignorant of, that beneath the pride of heart lay wells of love and faith and honour which the pride of his heart kept from flowing out.

And on a bright morning by the Sea of Galilee the hour came when the gentle Saviour was to bring these to light.

For Peter, it was the hour of sorrow for his sin. The thoughts of his warm and loving heart were dark and heavy with the remembrance of his sin. Often, often, by night and by day, he had said to himself, "Am I the same disciple who made the proud boast, and yet so basely fell? Am I the man who denied my Lord with oaths and curses, and am yet suffered the company of the disciples?" A great cloud of shame rested on his soul. He must have shrunk from the very thought of ever meeting his Lord again. But even while this thought was troubling him, the Master he had offended appeared, as in the earlier years, on the shores of the lake.

Three times the gentle Saviour put the question to His disciple, "*Lovest thou Me?*" Three

times He gave the disciple who had denied Him thrice an opportunity of saying that he loved Him. At last Peter, in an anguish of humility and love, cried out, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee."

It is not boasting now. The day of boasting of his own faithfulness is over. He has found out how weak, how passionate, how rash he has been. He knows that so long as he is on the earth there will be outbreaks, and fallings away, and turnings from the right path. But his gentle Master has taught him also to know that beneath all his weakness and sinfulness there is a living stream of love to Christ, which if he follow will lead him right.

The gentle Saviour in the presence of all the other disciples lifted the fallen Peter into his old place of honour. He put a new heart in him and a right spirit to make him strong and bold to speak for God and for righteousness. And He put him in charge, as a minister of the Gospel, of His flock. "Feed My lambs and My sheep," He said to him. And Peter became brave and true, and one of the most faithful among the apostles. It was Peter who preached the first sermon on Christ in Jerusalem,

and told its rulers that by wicked hands they had slain their Lord. It was he who told the same rulers, when they commanded him not to preach in Christ's name, that it was right to obey God rather than men. And it was he who first saw that the Gospel was not to Jews only, but to the whole world, and who himself went among the Gentiles and told them of Christ's love. A brave, true, kind-hearted man; a brave, true servant of God, who was made both brave and true by the gentleness of Christ.

"BOB;"

SOME CHAPTERS OF HIS EARLY LIFE.

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"BOB;" SOME CHAPTERS OF HIS EARLY LIFE.*

I.

AN EARLY ABSTINENCE MOVEMENT.

IN the year 1842 the abstinence movement was new and much looked down upon. And it was therefore not without opposition that some friends and myself were permitted to start a society in the mission district of the church to which we belonged. We had Sunday-schools, Sunday evening services for grown-up people, and at last, in addition, this abstinence society.

In order to stir up an interest in our new movement, and also to silence the sneers of those who

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said that no good would come of it, we resolved to have a house-to-house visitation of the district, and invite the people personally to our first meeting. It was while carrying out this part of our plan that we first met with "Bob," the story of whose early life I am about to tell.

The mission district was a street, from which long and crowded courts, or closes, opened on either side, and went so far back that they were narrow streets themselves. And, indeed, each of these closes was a world in itself. In one of the most open of them was a great stretch of brick wall, enclosing a slater's yard. And this wall we found all chalked over with sketches of dogs' and horses' heads. Struck by the power and beauty of these, we inquired who the artist was. But the only reply we could get was—"Oh, it'll be Bob;" or, "Oh, nae doubt it's some o' Bob's nonsense;" or something to that effect. One thing only was clear, that the artist's name in the district was "Bob."

We might never have known more than that, if we had not carried out our house-to-house visitation. But in the course of our visiting we came across Bob himself. We found him to be a young lad about seventeen—tall, fair, blue-eyed, with

hair tossed back in a mass over his brow, and with a soft and pleasant voice. He was living with his mother in a small "room and kitchen" house, and was sitting at a table when we entered, drawing some figures on a slate. Entering into conversation with his mother and him, we found them ready to join our society; and, in fact, before we left the house the young lad had consented to be a sort of district secretary of the movement.

Before two days were over, we had a very effective proof that our new secretary was in earnest. The sketches of dogs' and horses' heads were all rubbed out, and a real temperance picture chalked over the slateyard wall. At one end was a great whisky-barrel, with open doors like a shop, and a stream of people issuing out into the street. Beggars, thieves, fallen women, drunken workmen, drunken masters, drunkards of every age and class made up this procession. At the other end of the wall was a gallows, and at its foot a lot of dead people huddled in a heap. The picture was very rude—as rude and bald as a picture could well be—but the meaning was pretty clear on the whole, and it was made plain to everybody by the words below—"What comes

out of the whisky-barrel." Along the top of the wall there ran an announcement of our meeting.

The meeting was a great success. But we were much indebted for that to Bob's chalk drawing. His mother and he were among the first to arrive, and by-and-by our little hall was full.

The speaking was not very bright. We were all beginners in the work, and we had none of the facts at our finger ends which make it easy to fill a temperance speech now. But we did our best, and we got some of the people themselves to say a word or two; and what was better than all, and quite unlooked for, we got a speech from Bob.

It came about in this way. We were proposing some votes of thanks at the close, and one of us rose and said the greatest thanks were due to the artist who helped us by his temperance picture. The meeting caught up the idea at once, and over the whole meeting rose loud cries for Bob, and clapping of hands. Bob's face went very red; but the people were resolved he should rise. And at last, after we also had pressed him strongly, he got up and spoke something to this effect:—

"Am nae great drawer: but I can draw better than I can speak. But I can say this much, that it's a gude wark we've begun this nicht. It's the

wark o' pittin' down drinking and saving drinkers. An' we can a' help in this wark if we only bide awa frae drink oursels.

"I believe the wark will succeed. I houp every lad and lass here will pit doun their names. Am gaun to pit doun mine. No that the pittin' doun o' our names will make us sober,—but it'll show what side we're on. An' it'll help to keep us awa' frae drink. We can aye say, if we're asked to drink : 'I've pitten doun my name.' That's a' I have to say."

II.

"MERE BITS O' BRASS."

Bob was little more than seventeen when these events took place. But the story I am going to tell begins seven years before. He was at that time a small piecer in a cotton factory, and his mother was an out-door worker for the same. The mother's occupation was "reeling." She had a long wooden reel in her house, on which she wound hanks of yarn. At this work she made about five shillings a week. Bob got two. This was all their living.

At that time they lived, not in the house where I first saw them, but in a miserable single apartment in the very roof of a four-storey land. It was a poor, cold, wretched little place. There was a tiny window in the gable of the roof, and a fireplace as tiny beside it. The reel filled one side of the room, the bed in which Bob and his mother slept, the other; and there was hardly room to move between. I never heard who Bob's father was, or

whether he was living, or dead, or anything at all about him. And those who knew Bob and his mother most intimately knew as little as I.

In the humble attic which I have described, this poor place, hot in summer and cold in winter, lived Bob and his mother,—Bell was her Christian name,—in the year 1835, when my story begins. In the winter evenings, when the rain was lashing on the slates overhead and sometimes dropping through, Bell and her piecer-boy would draw near the mite of a fireplace, poke the handful of coals in the grate into a glow to save a candle, draw the three-legged stool between them, and take their morsel of supper all alone. And poor though they were, those were happy times for these two—and times they often looked back to with tears in their eyes in the dark days near at hand.

At that time children as young as Bob were allowed to work in factories. And the two shillings a-week which he earned was a great addition to his mother's means. His work was to walk backward and forward with the spinning-jenny and piece up threads which broke, and now and again to creep below the machine and sweep the cotton dust from the floor. It was not hard work, nor very dangerous; and if the spinner happened

to be a kindly man, children could be very happy at the work. But ten years of age was very young even in those days. And it was an age when an innocent and unsuspecting child might very easily be tempted into crime.

At the machine next to the one where Bob "pieced" was a boy two years older, called Ned. Now Ned had not even a mother to care for him, or tell him what was good or bad. And being but a boy, and not having been taught to love anything better, Ned set his heart on sweets. "Candy," "white rock," "black man," and "shortbread" were the things in the world which Ned thought best worth having. But he had only two and sixpence a-week, and it took all that, and what the parish allowed besides, to pay for Ned's lodging and keep. Ned had once or twice in his life had a penny, and he always spent it on sweets. And now he set his heart on having sweets. Ned fell into a snare that is very common in this world. He fell into the snare of "hasting to be rich." He said to himself—"It will be a long while before I earn as much as will let me buy sweets for myself. But if I had some of these brass things lying about, I could get as much as ever I wanted." But he could not get

brass things which were not his own without help. So he walked home with Bob every night for a week, and, bit by bit, told him of the joys of eating sweets, and of the easy way by which they could get as much of these as they liked—"We've only to tak an aul' socket or twa. An' Bob, they're useless things—mere bits o' brass—they'll niver be missed."

I am telling the story just as it happened. I do not wish to make Ned out a villain and Bob an innocent victim. It is true, Ned was older, and he was the tempter; but Bob knew things that Ned never heard of, and yet he let himself be tempted. He knew well enough it was stealing to which Ned was coaxing him. And it was the work of a thief they two agreed to do.

The articles they stole were things which boys might well fancy were only worth as old brass,—"Mere bits o' brass,"—as Ned said. They were spare fittings kept lying about to be ready for use. And the boys easily found a wicked store-keeper outside to give them pennies for each article they brought. It was some time before the fittings were missed. But after the thefts had gone on for several weeks the number of things missed became so great, that the whole factory got into a stir to

find out the thieves. In this the men were as earnest as the masters, and suggested a plan by which the thief might be found out.

It was noticed that the thefts were mostly on the Saturdays, when the factory closed at four. Accordingly one Saturday, as the workpeople came down into the court, they found two policemen stationed at the door, who searched each individual as he stepped out. Then each stood aside to see their neighbours searched. By-and-by Ned and Bob, suspecting nothing, came out with the usual bit of brass in a sleeve of their jackets, and were discovered at once. Their first taste of the evil of crime was the sharp clutch the policemen took of their arms, and the howl of anger which rose up from the crowd, who had waited to the end.

I do not know what happened in Ned's lodging that Saturday evening. But in the lone attic where Bell waited to give her boy his tea, what took place was worse than death. Two policemen and one of the factory foremen came up and searched every corner of the room, and although nothing was found, she was told in a cruel way of her boy's guilt, and informed that she could have no more work from the mill.

Poor, lonely, innocent Bell! Her sorrow was too great for tears. It seemed as if her heart would burst. At first she was stunned. Then she became excited. Then she started from her seat, and paced up and down the little attic till far into the night. Then she lay down, but could not sleep. The two thoughts which chased each other through her soul were—"My boy a thief! My boy in jail!" On Sunday morning she tried to think it was all a dream, and that Bob had only been out all night. And then she listened to noises below as if these might be his foot on the stair. She never seemed to have thought of going to see him in the police-cells. She was not herself. As the hours of the Sunday went on she still listened for his step on the stair. She neither lit her fire nor took food all that day; and it was the end of December, and bitterly cold. What was heat or cold, or food or hunger to the mother whose only child was in a police-cell?

III.

FINGERS AND TOES.

DREARILY dawned that next Monday morning in the poor attic where Bell had passed another miserable night. She knew that her boy would be brought before the magistrates that morning, and wrapping her thin blue mantle around her, and drawing its hood over her head, she tottered rather than walked—shrinking from the gaze of every passer-by—to the Court where he was to appear.

She had not long to wait; Ned and he were brought up among the first. It was no bad dream she had dreamed. That was her own boy, her one delight on earth, whom she beheld in the dock. But could it all be true? Had the harsh policemen not made matters worse than they were? Could so young a child have done all the evil they said? Could he have gone on doing it, and she not know? Perhaps, after all, her boy was innocent; perhaps somebody would step out of the crowd and say he was innocent. Alas! Ned and

he had been taken in the very act, and they did not once try to deny their crime.

They had really stolen the bits of brass; they had been stealing them for many weeks. The poor children cried the whole time of the trial. At the close, each got sixty days in Bridewell.

As the two boys were marched out of the Court, Bell fairly broke down, and had to be helped into the street.

It was December when this took place. Winter had set in early that season, and was very severe. A long-continued and hard frost lay upon the land, and great suffering fell even upon those who were free among the people. The suffering was still greater in the prisons. No tenderness had come into humane hearts then on behalf of prisoners. No one thought their health worth caring for. The Bridewells were not heated; the bed-coverings were scant; the food was poor. And the frost struck through with all its might at the two pitiful children who were shut up in a dismal cell. Bob suffered the most; he was of a fragile make. He had never been very strong, and long before the sixty days had come to a close his naked feet were bitten with the frost, and two of his toes ready to drop off.

At last, however, came the long-wearied-for sixtieth day when the poor children were to be let free. Poor Bob! The day of his freedom was a day of sorrow. It was a cold raw February day, a bitter east wind blowing along the street, and the pavement wet with the slush of snow that had fallen the night before. About a dozen prisoners were to be let out that morning, and a crowd of poor people who expected them were gathered about the gate. One here, and another there, gave a joyful cry as they got back some member of their circle. Bob had thought that his mother would be surely there. He had often wondered why she had not come to see him, but the thought that he should meet her now had kept him awake the only part of the night when the pain in his foot was quiet enough to let him sleep. He looked eagerly round, but she was nowhere in that crowd, and tears came into his eyes as he edged side-wise from the throng and began to "hirple" towards his old home. It was slow work. He could only put the heel of his disabled foot to the ground, and to do even that much was pain. Often he rested by the way. Then pains of another kind shot through his heart. As he came near the court where he was so well known,

and in which he had gained so early an evil reputation, shame took hold upon him. He was afraid to be seen; afraid that people would reproach him; afraid that his mother would never love him again; but afraid most of all, perhaps, lest he should meet the policemen who had taken him first to prison.

At length he was at the foot of the long "turnpike" stair that led up to his mother's attic. The pain in going up the steps was terrible. Several times he had to sit down and rest. At the last flight of steps he had to crawl on hands and knees. He began to be terribly shaken and afraid. There was no neighbour, no "but-and-ben" on the landing. As he crawled upwards he heard no sound; the stillness was like the grave. When he came to the door his strength was utterly gone. He could not reach up to the latch. "Mother," he cried; but no mother appeared. He knocked, but there was no answer. Struggling up in a last effort of strength to the latch, he tried to open the door; it was locked. He sunk down on the threshold and sobbed aloud. He must have lain huddled up in that state for some hours, and fallen asleep. What he next remembered was the confusion of voices at the foot of the stair.

"Somebody's moanin' at Bell's door."

"Div ye say sae? Wha can it be?"

"Has she maybe died in the Infirmary, think ye?"

"Weel, they do say that people that dee there aften come back to their auld hoose afore leavin' the yirth."

"Havers, woman! That's nae ghost! It's some leevin' body in pain."

And then Bob saw the heads of four or five neighbouring women peering up at him from the stair. "Losh, me," said one of them, "it's Bob." "I declare it's Bell's laddie hame again!" And the same voice added, "O laddie, laddie, ye hae dune muckle mischief. Yir mither's in the Infirmary wi' the fivver."

When Bob heard this last sentence, the whole truth flashed upon his mind. At a glance he seemed to see the connection between his crime and his mother's illness. He understood now why she had never come to see him. His sobs burst out anew, and became a low despairing cry. "O ma mither, ma mither!" he cried. And in his grief and pain and weakness, the poor child fainted away.

When he came to himself he was on a shake-

down in the warm kitchen of one of the houses on the landing below. I will give the name of the Samaritan who took him in. It was Mrs. Greenwood, the Lady Bountiful of that little world, the kind-hearted wife of a kind-hearted man. When the two heard that the boy was home and ill, they opened their door and "took him in."

Bob never forgot the kindness received from these two that night. It was the nearest approach to Heaven he had ever known. It was a kindness that did not work by halves; they kept the boy till his mother was better, and back in her home.

IV.

"TRYING HIS LUCK."

It was a long while before Bob was able to walk, and when he got out again it was with eight toes instead of ten. That was a terrible infliction for his mother and him. It was loss of bread. The mill district of the city at that time was little better than a village. Everybody knew everybody else. And Bell and her boy were only too well known. The toes were a sort of Cain's mark on the boy—a certificate of conduct telling the wrong way. He was too poor to have shoes. The toes told of Bridewell; and Bridewell brought back the story of the bits of brass. And factory after factory refused to receive him within their gates.

By the help of some neighbours, Bell got work for her reel; but she was no longer able for the amount of work she could do before her illness: and the want of Bob's wages made a great difference in her means.

But God was kind. Gifts from unknown givers

came to them in the form of coals and potatoes and meal. Bob was able now and again to gain a penny by holding horses on market days, and running messages. And the Greenwoods remained fast friends to him till his troubles were over.

Although Mr. Greenwood lived "up a close," he was a man of some wealth. He lived in the back land because it was his own; and in the land fronting the street he had a clothier's shop. This was a main resort for Bob; and he was always made welcome there. Mr. Greenwood saw that the boy had learned by what he had suffered; and that he was turned away from dishonest ways for ever. He believed in the boy and trusted him, and contrived many a message just to give Bob the pleasure of earning an honest penny. But he did more than that. He encouraged the boy to spend his leisure time in learning. And sitting at the friendly fire in the cutting-room, Bob learned to be a thoroughly good reader, and found out that he had a gift for drawing. There was a slate in the shop on which many a rude drawing was made with the fine chalk used by clothiers. And the kindly man would stop his work to admire a face, or a tree, or a bridge, when the boy tried to draw these objects on the slate.

One morning the clothier was sitting on his bench reading the weekly paper as Bob came in. "Bob," he said, "I see something in the paper this morning that will do for you." It was an advertisement by a great pattern-designing and art publishing firm for an apprentice. "Look here, Bob," the eager friend said, "the only condition is, that the boy must have a taste for drawing."

But Bob replied: "They will look at my taes." "No;" said Mr. Greenwood, "and don't you say anything about your toes. And nobody now has any business to ask you about the past. You have suffered plenty already by these toes. At any rate, you go and try; and go this very forenoon.

Bob returned home and told his mother. He was made as tidy and clean as possible. And looking in as he passed at his friend's shop, the boy set off, as Mr. Greenwood said, "to try his luck."

He knew the building well at whose door he had to knock. Often he had passed it when going messages. Often had he looked in the winter evenings at its three tiers of windows all lighted up. Often on such evenings had he marked the flitting shadows of the printers as they moved among the presses. Often he had been struck

in the daytime with the great rope dangling from the topmost storey at one end and swinging up and down great bales of paper. Oftener still, he had stopped for a moment at the beautiful porch at the other end, and looked through the glass door at the fine pictures and statues which were ranged around the walls of the entrance hall. At this very door he stood this morning, but with fear filling his heart. What chance had he, so poor, so ragged, to be received in a place so fine?

And, indeed, he seemed very poor. No wonder the junior partner, Mr. Bathgate, looked at him as he was shown into his room. He was still a tiny-looking boy—he had not begun yet to shoot up into the tall youth he had become when we first met with him. And he was bare-footed. And his trowsers, through honest wear, were more like knickerbockers than trowsers. His jacket also was too small for him. The cap he held in his hand was not without a hole or two. But over against all this, there was an intelligent face, two honest eyes, hair combed beautifully to one side, and hands and legs and face as clean as water could make them.

This was the conversation which followed :—

"You want to become our apprentice, my little man?"

"Ay."

"Can you draw?"

"A wee."

"What can you draw?"

"Dougs and horses and trees."

"Who taught you?"

"Masell."

"Well, take this home with you, and let me see what sort of copy you can make of it."

Mr. Bathgate took a wood-engraved landscape from a desk, a sheet of cardboard, and a pencil, wrapped them up for the boy, and told him to come back when he had made a copy.

Whoever saw Bob that forenoon as he turned his steps towards his home, saw a boy who ran as if he had wings. He seemed to himself to have become suddenly the heir of a great possession. The sheet of cardboard, the new pencil, the fine engraving; he had never had such things in his hand before. He did not stop till he reached his patron's shop, and unrolled his treasure on his cutting board. But Mr. Greenwood's heart gave way a little when he saw the landscape. "Can you manage this, do you think, Bob?" "I'll try," said Bob. And away he ran up the long stairs to his mother.

He heard the reel as he came up the stair. There she was, when the boy pushed open the door—winding, winding, winding. The only events of her life were going to the mill for copes, and returning with hanks—and, besides that, seeing her boy come in at the door. To-day he was unlike what she had ever seen him. He seemed to have grown taller. His face was filled with eager hope. He was panting to tell her what had taken place. But he had also a great favour to ask. "Mither, could you give me a penny?" Do not smile—you to whom a penny is nothing—to whom a sovereign is less than a penny to these two. "A penny, Bob?" "Ay, mither—to get a penny cawnle. I'll hae to sit up a while after ye've geen to bed." Bob got the penny, changed that for a candle, and at once settled down to his task.

He had a good many hours yet of daylight, and he used them well. He had never worked with so soft a pencil, or on paper so fit for drawing. And he worked with great care. Then, when evening came on, he lit his candle and still continued to work. His mother went to bed; but Bob worked on. He heard the cuckoo-clock in the house below striking the hours till far into the morning. About four o'clock he laid down his pencil. The

task was done. Then he set the fire for his mother's breakfast, put the kettle near, and slipped into bed.

At ten o'clock he was at Mr. Bathgate's office door.

"What!" said that gentleman, "are you back again? The work has been too hard for you, I fear."

"No."

"But you can't have done it already."

"Ay; it's here."

"This! Did *you* do this? You? Yourself? When did you do it?"

"I sat up a' nicht till I finished it."

"Did you though? Sat up till you did it?"

Just then Mr. Currie, the other partner, came in; and the two went into an inner room and had a long examination of the copy. It had been beautifully done. At last coming back into the room where Bob was, they said,—

"We are very much pleased with the copy you have made. You would make a capital designer. But we are afraid our place will hardly suit you."

Bob's heart sank.

"We give no wages to our apprentices; and our apprentices have to pay us for teaching them."

There was a little quiver on the boy's lips as he answered, "But I maun hae wages; I maun try to help my mither now."

The two partners looked at each other for a moment, and went into the inner room again. In a short time one of them came out and said,— "Come back here on Monday, and we'll think over your application till then."

When Bob returned on Monday, he was told they were so much pleased with the copy he had drawn, that they had resolved to make an exception in his favour. They would take him without a premium, and they would give him three and sixpence a week the first year of his apprenticeship. He might begin next day.

That was a day of joy in the little world where the principal people were the Greenwoods, and Bell, and her boy. Mr. Greenwood rigged up the boy in a new suit of clothes, which he could pay for when he was rich. He got his neighbour the shoemaker to give a pair of shoes on the same terms. And Bob's luck began.

V.

SUCCESS AND TRIAL.

Bob succeeded beyond all expectation. He became one of the best designers and draughtsmen in the establishment. At the end of two years he was receiving ten shillings a-week, and able to take a better house for his mother. And long before the seven years of his apprenticeship were finished, he was the most trusted man in the place, and the one to whom a difficult piece of work was certain to be sent. When his time was out, the partners marked their satisfaction with him by making him a gift of money and a beautiful watch, and at the same time appointing him manager over a special department of their work.

But Bob was not to enter on his new kingdom without both trial and sorrow. It was at that time a universal custom in workshops and warehouses for workmen to give "treats" of drink on all the great occasions of their career. There was the "'prentice pint," the "journeyman pint," and the

"foreman pint." Bob's poverty had excused him from the first. But when he became journeyman and manager at one step, his fellow workmen demanded a special treat.

But Bob had, long before this, been drawn into our abstinence work. He was the secretary of our district society, and about to be made president. He was the leading spirit of our movement, and in thorough earnest. And he flatly refused to give the treat demanded. Mortal offence was taken. I can look back to those times and vividly recall them. Not designers and printers only, but ministers of the gospel as well, were expected to give these "treats." A young minister coming into a Presbytery had to give a bottle of wine; and whether he drank or not, he had to pay his share of what others drank at the Presbytery dinners. It is difficult to believe now that anger so deep and bitter could be cherished towards the men who had the courage to refuse such demands. This anger came out in full strength, and over all the works, against Bob. "What! was he to set up to be better than his neighbours? Were the back-books of his life so clean that he set up to be the sober man of the works? It was mean. It was miserly. Only a sneak and a churl would act in that way."

And Bob saw in the averted looks and short snappish answers he got, and in the sneery laughter of the workmen when he had occasion to pass, how greatly he had offended them.

One morning when he came to his desk he found a drawing of a right foot with only three toes on it. That was the morning of the day he came to my lodgings and told me of his sorrows, with tears in his eyes.

But there was worse to follow.

The evil customs which prevailed among workpeople had companion customs among the masters. Bargains were made and accounts settled in the dram-shop—and when it was not there, it was in the private parlour of the office, over wine and spirits. This latter was looked upon as the genteeler way. And this was the way the great art-printing and publishing house of Currie & Bathgate did.

Now Bob's new position gave him a room in the premises which led into the private parlour. The ingenious malice of his enemies resolved to strike him in his most tender part. One forenoon, when Mr. Bathgate entered the private parlour with a customer, he found the cupboard in which the wines were kept had been tampered with, and a bottle of the rarest taken away. Nothing was said

that day; but the same thing was noticed a few days later by Mr. Currie.

Before long several bottles were taken. Now nobody could enter this parlour by day unobserved by Bob. And nobody could so easily get access to the wine as he. But to do his masters justice, they never once suspected him. There the malice of his enemies was completely at fault. They had planned their wickedness so that suspicion should fall on their victim. But their victim's character was now a divine shield around him.

Still the thefts went on, and began to be talked about among the men. The heads of the firm resolved to sift the matter to the bottom. Mr. Bathgate sent for Bob one afternoon into the private parlour, and laid a slip of paper before him on which these words were written: "Search the young foreman's room, you will find the bottles there." And the bottles were actually all found there that afternoon. "Now, Robert," said the friendly master, "this is a plot to hurt you. But it is also a wickedness which must not be permitted in our works. Whoever is the doer of it must work by night, for if it were done by day you must have found it out. Give me the key of your room for a night or two, and I will set a watch myself."

Robert was in the act of thanking his master for his good opinion of him, and was handing over his key, when the night porter knocked at the door. A great hamper had been delivered in the yard, and there was some living creature in it. Along with the hamper came a letter. It was from Mr. Bathgate's brother, the captain of a vessel trading to North America. He had been asked to bring a bear over to some zoological garden. He had no convenience to keep it in the ship after the men had left. Could his brother get it chained up in his yard for a night or two, till it could be sent off to its destination.

With great ado the bear was taken to the yard at the other end of the warehouse, and fastened up by its chain. More than an hour was spent over this business, and Bob and his master parted for the night.

It was a very eventful night for him. His enemies had resolved to complete his shame that night. The wine press was to be opened once more and a bottle broken, and its contents spilled over the floor of Bob's room. The young foreman's office-coat was to be dipped in the spilt wine, and to crown all, the skeleton key by which the press was opened was to be slipped into its pocket.

All this was done, and all this was discovered by Mr. Bathgate in the morning when he entered the room. He came early, before the bell had rung. A single glance sufficed to show him how matters stood. What he saw had been carefully planned ; but those who planned it had never calculated that the masters would take the foreman's side. Was it conspiracy? Was it the work of only one? But how could any one have done what he saw? He was himself the last to leave the building. He had seen even the porter leave before him, and he was the first to arrive in the morning. A little while after came the porter, and began to light up the corridors and printing-rooms. By-and-by the various workpeople arrived. Mr. Bathgate, completely puzzled, was waiting in his office, wondering what next step should be taken to find out the culprit, when the porter rushed in, under great excitement, and told him that the bear had nearly killed a man. And sure enough, when they went to the yard in which the bear was chained, they saw a form huddled up in a corner and moaning between fear and pain. And they found the bear in a great rage, stretched to the full length of his chain, and pawing at the crouching form to get it into its grasp.

In this strange way the mystery was laid bare. The workman who had been detailed by those in the plot to bring Bob into trouble had secreted himself in the top storey of the building, and after the mischief already described was wrought, had gone, as he had done night after night before, to the rope used for swinging up and down the bales of paper, to slide himself down into the yard, from whence, by climbing the wall, he could get away unperceived.

But the bear was an unexpected actor on the scene, and not until the miserable wretch was near the lower end of the rope did he become aware of its presence. Then he heard its breathing, then a harsh grunt or two, and before he could escape he was in the arms of this terrible creature. It would have been a relief to him to have known that it was a bear; he thought it was something infinitely worse. In his mortal terror he got loose from its first embrace, but the yard was too little for him to escape entirely. He could not get near the wall over which he expected to climb. It was to that wall the bear was chained. He could only dodge about in the opposite corners to escape the clutches of his dark-looking enemy. This unequal battle had lasted the whole night long. At last,

completely cowed and prostrate, he gave in, and was found more dead than alive crouched up in a corner of the yard.

I need not dwell on what followed. The half-dozen who had plotted the mischief were dismissed. And Bob found himself higher in the esteem of his masters, and at last of his fellow workmen as well, than before. The affair led to another result that was good : the firm closed the wine parlour, and were among the first in the city to give up the practice of treating their customers to drink.

VI.

CONCLUSION.

Bob's next advance was Paris. The firm sent him there to study the designs of the Continent, and adapt them for English goods. The ragged boy who began at three and sixpence a week was now a well-dressed, thoroughly educated artist, with a salary of three hundred pounds; and so well did he acquit himself in his new sphere that at the end of a few years he was asked to join the firm, and open a branch of their house in London.

Although he changed in many things, there was no change in his love for his mother. He was her stay and comfort as long as she lived. His respect for her was very beautiful. He bought a cottage for her in the outskirts of the city, and supplied her with every comfort she could desire. He spent his holidays in her society. On these occasions he took her little jaunts, and attended to her dress and winter stores. When absent from her he wrote a long letter every Sunday evening, in which he

gave, just as he had given when he was a lad, an account of the sermons he had heard. He would willingly have taken her to London to keep house for him, but this she steadily refused. She was too old to learn London ways; she would have been an object of derision to some, a subject of gossip to others. Her ways were old-fashioned, her speech was broadly Scotch. She could never have managed servants. Only once did he prevail on her to come and see him. It was to visit the second Exhibition; but the confusion and noise were too much for her, and he did not press her to come again.

The last time I saw Bob was at his mother's funeral. He had become by that time a famous man in his art, and no one could have supposed, when they looked at the tall, fair-haired gentleman, who stood, with moist eyes, and uncovered, at the grave, or heard him speak his thanks to the company in the sweet English speech to which he had attained, that this was the same being who thirty years before had been a poor outcast boy seeking work in vain in the neighbouring mills.

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.

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